

# *Access and Engagement: A New Zealand Study*

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*This chapter considers a qualitative study of students' perceptions of the nature of engagement in a degree programme. The findings of the study are discussed with regard to studies of attrition and retention proposed by Vincent Tinto and critiqued by a range of authors. As a concept, "engagement" provides a useful frame for debate, and the data suggests that engagement is a critical element in successful study within this study.*

**A**ccess to tertiary (i.e., postsecondary) studies is a function of the interface between the community and educational institutions. The accessibility of an institution includes the ability to attract, retain, and foster the success of people who wish to participate in study. Access can be expressed in terms of enrollment, retention, and success, with the definition of success needing some particular clarification with regard to the goals of the institution, the community, and individuals. There is a significant body of research addressing the issues of access. This chapter uses the work of Vincent Tinto (1975, 1982, 1993, 1997) as a reference point in its discussions focusing on the concept of "engagement" as a mechanism of access. Please note that the conventions in written English that are standard in New Zealand are retained as an editorial commitment to valuing difference.

The seminal work of Vincent Tinto (1975) in the 1970s on why students leave tertiary studies cemented the scholarly focus on attrition for some time. Many studies followed from his work, and these looked at the reasons students did not complete their tertiary programmes. Tinto's early work directed attention to attrition, and at the same time brought the institution and its practices into focus and began the very useful process of raising the expectation that institutions might think about institutional factors and not just student factors in the attrition of students.

The more recent work by Tinto (1982, 1993, 1997, 2002) demonstrates a progression from identifying why students leave tertiary studies to identifying why students might stay, shifting the focus from attrition to persistence. Within this approach is an explicit expectation that institutions must take responsibility

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for the quality of the learning environment they offer—a learning environment that makes it possible for students not only to stay but to learn, to succeed at their studies, and to go on to make effective contributions to the communities in their orbit.

Tinto's early work identified academic and social engagement as the critical factors in attrition. He conceptualised lack of engagement along the same lines as Durkheim's (1951) view of suicide as resulting from inadequate integration into the social fabric. Tinto (1975) suggested that dropout can be similarly modelled as lack of connection with the academic and social system of the tertiary institution. Although "dropout" and retention do not constitute a matched pair, the concept of engagement, or connection, permeates both discussions. Recent thinking (Gee, 1998) suggests that lack of connection would have its origins in the attempts of institutions to maintain an exclusivity that would not provide an engaging environment for already underrepresented groups, especially where these are minorities within the wider society.

Tinto's work has been criticised (Tierney, 1999) for not considering the two-way process of accommodation between institutions and minority student populations that may be seen as essential if tertiary study is to be accessible to traditionally underrepresented groups. The concept of engagement as a reciprocal activity opens the door to an interpretation wherein the activity of engagement may be seen as a mechanism not just for the student to adapt to, or integrate into, the institution but for the institution to also adapt to diverse students. Failure to engage or integrate may be as much a function of the individual experience as of the institutional attitude. While minorities such as Maori and those from Pacific nations in New Zealand continue to be overrepresented in "dropout" statistics, institutional adaptation remains part of institutional responsibility. Tinto (2002) identified institutional responsibility as a key element in supporting student persistence.

Tinto's (1975, 1982, 1993, 1997) revised model of engagement that is his "Student Integration Model" (1997, p. 11) has been the subject of considerable research. Although the word "integration" has connotations of cultural abasement in countries where racial, ethnic, and religious minorities have been subjected to one-sided integration, its interpretation as

engagement offers potential for reciprocity and equality. The work of Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) is illuminating. They used structural equation modelling to test Tinto's model. This usefully extended the qualitative and statistical analyses already carried out and confirmed the direct effects of many of the elements of the Tinto model. The authors noted that the critical factors were identifiable statistically, but from the practitioner's perspective it would not be useful to simply provide disconnected sets of services to prevent attrition. Rather, a concerted effort is needed to integrate services so that needs may be met in a way that acknowledges the complex interplay of factors that is expressed in individual students.

Tinto's recent work (1993, 1997, 2002) described and analysed learning communities. He proposed that the significant elements supporting effective access (i.e., enrollment, retention, and success) to tertiary education are academic and social support, academic and social integration, and student learning. In other words effective access means that students are engaged. For this to occur, Tinto states that the institution must be committed to student engagement, and this translates into the fourth element of effective access, which is high expectations, defined as a genuine belief across the institution in the capacity of all students to succeed.

This chapter considers a Bachelor of Education (Teaching) programme taught at the home campus of a major university and also at a campus some 20 kilometres distant in an area that is economically disadvantaged and is peopled with groups who are generally underrepresented in tertiary studies and particularly at the bachelor-degree level. The programme is located on the campus of a polytechnic institution. The programme is "owned" by the university while the polytechnic provides the space and student services.

The challenge for this degree programme is to provide a learning environment that makes it possible for its students to succeed. The students in this programme are culturally diverse and primarily mature students who have frequently gained entry to the university through its provisions for special admission. These provisions recognise life and work experience and academic potential where traditional academic qualifications have not been attained by applicants over the age of 20.

This chapter offers discussion around the qualitative findings arising from interviews with the students studying in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) programme. This discussion aims to add rich interpretation to some of the elements of engagement in tertiary study proposed by Tinto, critiqued by other authors, and heard in the student voices.

## Research Method

The project method was to interview students from each of the year cohorts and then to reinterview these students each subsequent year of study and including their first year as teachers. The interview schedule provided an open-ended guide for the interviewer and was designed in collaboration with the students. Interviews are between 60 and 90 minutes long. The interviews were conducted with a view to recording the students' experiences and their interpretations. The project has completed its first year of interviewing (51 interviews); the project team has been expanded, and the second year of interviews has begun.

Transcripts were analysed using a computer package, N6 (QSR Software, 2003) that supports qualitative analysis.

## Findings

The interview transcripts provided rich data regarding the histories and experiences of students in the programme. This monograph chapter offers an analysis of the interview transcripts using the theme of engagement drawn from Tinto's work as a conceptual framework. Tinto's (2002) recent work on the development of learning communities proposed several factors that support enrollment, retention, and success for students, and these factors cluster around the concept of engagement. The following analysis considers elements of engagement in the transcripts of the participating students. Note that all quotes are from transcripts of interviews with students.

### *Engagement With Lecturers*

This element is expressed in the data across three strands: (a) question asking, (b) lecturer accessibility, and (c) feedback. Most students identified asking questions of lecturers as critical to their learning. Those who were comfortable with asking questions saw it as

an important skill and noted that some lecturers could be asked within the lecture but, where the lecturer seemed unresponsive, students kept their questions for tutorials, and some approached the lecturer after class. The use of e-mail was identified as a strategy that circumvented personal contact when students were not confident and alternatively as a strategy that extended positive contact with the lecturer. The following exchange was typical:

“Sometimes I just don't understand what she's talking about.”

“Do you ask?”

“No I don't I'm just too afraid to ask. I don't know why.”

For many students in the study, asking questions was a difficult and emotive issue. These students had frequently experienced negative responses to asking questions in their primary and secondary schooling. They perceived asking questions as an expression of ignorance and had this view reinforced by the response of teachers and peers in their early education. When it came to asking questions in their tertiary programme, the desire to understand did not always supersede past experience, but there was evidence of students looking for strategies such as e-mail and asking friends to avoid direct contact and public exposure. Some lecturers were identified as establishing an environment in which asking questions was valued, but this meant students with issues about asking questions would go to them directly, not in class. One student commented, “the teacher's attitude back there, because she was very loud and scary and I didn't want to ask her because I didn't want to look stupid.” Another student asserted, “There are teachers I do feel comfortable around . . . and the ones that just, I don't know, it makes your heart jump, scares the hell out of you and you don't want to approach them about nothing what so ever.”

Asking questions overlaps with lecturer accessibility. The most frequent comment here was that accessibility was related to learning, especially in clarification of assignment requirements and slightly less frequently in relation to concept elaboration. Willingness to talk after class, take questions in class, be available during office hours, and make e-mail and phone contact were identified as elements of accessibility.



Most students saw accessibility as important and were surprised by the degree of accessibility available. This contradicted their preconceived notions of how lecturers behave based on prior schooling experience. A small number of students were aware of lecturer accessibility but did not use it, preferring to focus on peers as their source of interactive academic engagement. Students identified some lecturers as not accessible: “You have this idea you know, a stuffy room with a man in tweeds and you know, minding his ps and qs, you know, all the rest of it but it’s not like that.”

Feedback as an element of engagement produced universal agreement as to its value and a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with regard to its variable timeliness and quality: “. . . and we didn’t get our assignment back before we went out to school, we just needed to know if we were OK.” Students saw feedback as important. As potential teachers they had learnt about its place in the educative process and had experienced its value in their own learning. There were no expressions of negative value in this factor, and criticism was reserved for performance.

Engagement with lecturers was identified by students in their second and third year of study as a way to develop reciprocal understandings. They saw the diversity of the students as a challenge for both lecturers and students and identified ways both groups had learned to adapt to each other. This was primarily expressed in growth of understanding about different cultures and willingness to respect difference. Engagement was thus a reciprocal process at the teaching interface. One student noted that “the teachers learn from our cultures . . . and that’s where they know where our needs are. [How] a teacher knows where the student’s needs are is to involve with the students.” Referring to classroom diversity, another student stated, “. . . So it gives everyone a richness of everyone else’s cultures.”

### *Engagement With Peers*

Although Tinto (1997) separated academic and social engagement, our research found that the two elements were inextricable. Engagement with peers brings together the concepts of academic engagement and social engagement. The students in our study frequently described their study groups as being both serendipitous with regard to ethnic, gender, and age mix and intentional with regard to study needs. These

groups were primarily student initiated and sometimes lecturer facilitated. The members of informal study groups were frequently described as friends, and study groups occurred either in space provided by the institution or in people’s homes. Most people in the study identified themselves with informal membership in study groups and saw them as learning based and providing support by stronger students for weaker students. One student shared,

We all sit together every day and we share sometimes . . . like the maths and we’re sitting there, listen and when the lecture’s finished someone understands, some who don’t so that was really important in our group . . . we’re all in groups and discuss and if we don’t understand then it’s back to the lecturer. . . . We’re like friends, we’re like mothers, we’re like sisters . . . go to somebody else’s house and then we talk and they have a cuppa . . . .

Another student commented, “We realised there was a problem there and we worked together as we had to do something about it eh. So we got together and made lecture notes.”

There was much comment on the value of the cultural and ethnic diversity of peers in student learning: “I’m quite good at weaving my way in and talking with other people, and it’s also an exchange of resources as well as your tapping into their knowledge, they can also—you can share yours as well.”

One group was identified as having a language-based factor where students speaking a particular language could work through content issues with reference to the common language that was not the language of instruction. One student mentioned that the group “talked about it in our language, the Tongan language, to be easier.”

A small group of students in the study identified themselves as loners, excluded or voluntarily not engaged, preferring to work alone. These students identified issues around age difference or barriers related to ethnic and cultural differences. One said, “There’s no one that’s interested in my interests. There’s no one I can relate to.” Another remarked, “I recognise when they ask them some questions, they don’t even want to share.”



## *Engagement With the Institution*

Tinto's (1997) model identified student commitment to the institution as a factor in access to tertiary study, and in a later discussion Tinto (2002) talked about the institution's commitment to the student expressed in provision of services and high expectations of student success. In this study several themes interact around this aspect of engagement: "Support Services," "Administration" (e.g., enrollment, loans, allowances, course changes), and "Value of the University."

High value was placed on the provision of support services, but interestingly these were seen by the students as the availability of the programme coordinator and other lecturers to provide academic support across subjects and "on call." Although the study does not ask explicitly about other services, when asked about what makes a difference to their learning, they rarely initiated a comment about them. Services with occasional comment were the counselling service and the student learning centre. For example, one student addressed the support of a particular staff member: "I think if it wasn't for \_\_\_\_\_ I couldn't speak more highly of her in terms of her dealing with the needs of the students here."

Administration attracted primarily negative comment in this study, which probably reflected the ongoing issues of providing service to a distant and different campus. One student indicated that her frustration with study was in part based on the lack of administrative efficiency of the institution, and many commented on this contributing to their uncertainty about their value within the University, but not in the profession.

Even when I've got tertiary fees to FAX through here sometimes there can be administrative hold ups. You know, they'll say, it has to be this piece of paper. Your name has to be on this list but I've got the receipt for paying fees so why can't I have my ID so I can get in and get the books early.

This programme is unusual in its location, which provides a useful opportunity to see if it makes a difference to students that while the programme is located in a relatively low-status polytechnic institution it is a programme belonging to a very high-status

university. Commitment to the institutions was expressed in different ways. Commitment to the polytechnic was expressed in terms of convenient location, friendly and diverse population of staff and students, and pleasant physical environment with easy parking. Small classes and high levels of interaction with staff were identified with the campus location and frequently contrasted negatively with the University's home campus. There was consistent expression of the value of the University ownership of the degree in terms of providing students with status, especially in the eyes of family and friends and also in terms of job seeking in New Zealand and overseas.

Well, I think it is quite important because I want to come out with a degree that has \_\_\_\_\_ University attached to it because I would say that the perception of people is that \_\_\_\_\_ University is a professional place to get a degree from.

## *External Factors*

There are a cluster of other factors identified in the analysis of the data that demonstrate some convergence with the analysis by Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) discussed previously. As well as affirming many elements of the Tinto (1975, 1982) model, they commented on some weakness in Tinto's explication of external factors in the delineation of student persistence. In this study the strength of family support and expectations, the "rightness" of the choice of the subject of education, and the impact of differences between home language and the language of study were noted as well as the need to take paid work. Although these sources may be external, these factors appear to impact strongly on engagement, as documented in the following quotes:

"Expectations . . . From my Mum and Dad? . . . I strongly believe it's still there. That's why I'm doing what I am doing now. . . ."

"Yes, my parents look after my baby . . . ."

"I'd have to get them all in my head and when I went home . . . translate it all back in my language. . . ."

External factors are clearly important both in supporting student persistence and in prompting attrition.



## Discussion

This chapter began with the intent to locate engagement as a conceptual entity within the broader idea of access and to test this conceptual framework on the data gathered from interviews of students in a particular programme. The work of Vincent Tinto has provided a model and referential research to add shape to the discussion. Tinto began with attrition; more recently, he has been working on how to foster productive retention. This chapter offers some leads on the implications of this work for a particular programme and tentatively for the generic model.

One of the key challenges to the Tinto model from this research is to consider the integration of academic and social engagement. Quantitative analysis of factors leads to separation of these items, but a qualitative approach suggests that they may be inextricable, and by extension it may be that separation detracts from access and persistence. This has been tested positively in the equation modelling study referred to previously and in the practice of learning communities described by Tinto (1997) and evaluated by McIntosh, Packskamp, and Ridzi (2001).

The second aspect for consideration is the positioning of external factors in this research agenda. It reflects considerable progress to shift thinking from assuming external factors are the primary cause of attrition and that institutions need only maintain their academic character, to seeing institutional responsibility as a large element in attrition. It would, however, be unfortunate to ignore external factors that may impinge on the capacity of the student to engage in learning. These factors have implications not just in terms of institutional responsibilities but also with regard to government policies. It may be argued that the balance of priorities (i.e., learning versus external pressures) is influenced by the quality of the learning environment, but the current models offer no specific analysis of where the direct effects are. It may be that when engagement reaches a significant level, structural and personal factors identified as external may have a reduced impact on the accessibility of tertiary education. Further, the quality of engagement in terms of creating a set of shared understandings between student and institution may be much more critical than Tinto's model suggests. Reciprocal engagement may be the mechanism for creating a learning environment that

is less alienating for students who are underrepresented in tertiary studies and who are more likely to drop out.

Tierney (1999) challenges Tinto's (1997) work with regard to the question of why and how institutions should change alongside students to facilitate engagement. In this study, the reciprocity element of engagement is seen at the teaching and learning interface with lecturers and among peers, but it is not evidenced in the administration. Thus, the possibility of engagement being reciprocal is supported at the "people" level but it is not well evidenced as yet at the "institutional" level in this study.

## Conclusion

This chapter affirms the work of Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) in calling for closer attention to variability in the way engagement factors are manifested in individuals while retaining an interest in teasing out the factors to be considered. It is suggested that the criticisms put forward by Tierney (1999) may have neglected the potential of engagement to be reciprocal. Thus, engagement and its depth of reciprocity continues to be a useful concept in evaluating the quality of the learning environment

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Factors Influencing Retention

*CRDEUL*



# *The Influence of Financial Aid on the Persistence of Students from Low-Socioeconomic Backgrounds*

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*This chapter is concerned with the relationship of financial aid to the persistence of students of low socioeconomic status (SES), an issue of increasing importance to policy makers, institutional leaders, and faculty. It summarizes selected foundational studies on this topic, presents studies that describe how financial aid is related to institutional factors that influence students' persistence, and identifies barriers that students from low-SES backgrounds face in completing their education. The chapter uses previous research to provide recommendations for research and practice. Specifically, future research needs to consider the interaction of financial aid with students' background characteristics and institutional experiences and to explore the reasons for the differential impact of various forms of financial aid. The chapter concludes that efforts to expand grant aid represent a promising strategy that can improve the persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds.*

**I**nstitutions of higher education, policy makers, and the public increasingly are concerned about the accessibility and affordability of higher education for students. Society values equality of educational opportunity and looks to higher education to ensure access to students of low-socioeconomic status (SES) (College Board, 1999; Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001). The data suggest, however, that family income appears to have a direct relationship with college attendance and success. One study found that for high school graduates in 1992, “The proportion of all students who enrolled in postsecondary education within two years of high school graduation was directly related to family income: 64 percent of low-income, 79 percent of

middle-income, and 93 percent of high-income students attended postsecondary education by 1994” (U.S. Department of Education, 1997, p. iv). Fitzgerald (2003) adds that despite efforts to improve college access and attendance for lower-SES students, “. . . significant [financial] barriers to college remain” (p. 3).

Economic theories of student departure emphasize the importance of individual finances and financial aid in enabling educational attainment. Many studies have examined the influence of financial aid on students' collegiate experiences. For example, the role of financial aid in equalizing educational opportunities for students in need of financial assistance (Astin, 1975; St. John,

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Andrieu, Oescher, & Starkey, 1994), and the influence of economic factors on educational outcomes such as academic and intellectual development or grade point average (e.g., Cabrera, Nora & Castañeda, 1992; St. John, Paulsen, & Starkey, 1996), have been explored in detail.

This chapter is designed to summarize existing research on the relationship of financial aid with the persistence of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, defined as students whose parents' income is below the poverty level or education level is less than a bachelor's degree, and then present strategies that, according to the literature, enhance persistence. It begins by reporting selected foundational economic studies of college persistence and then considers expanded studies that explain how student finances interact with other factors to influence college persistence. Then it examines how low-socioeconomic backgrounds affect college student persistence. Based upon the extant research, the chapter concludes with recommendations for institutions that wish to improve the student persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds through financial aid programs that have been demonstrated to have a positive effect.

## Economic Studies of Degree Attainment

Foundational economic studies of persistence looked to ascertain the direct effects of financial factors on student persistence. For example, several studies relied on price-response theories of attending college based upon students' ability to pay and their perceptions of the benefits of college attendance (e.g., St. John, 1990; St. John, Kirshstein, & Noell, 1991; Stampen & Cabrera, 1988). Studies that focus on the influence of financial factors related to persistence examine how financial need, student aid packaging, and the adequacy of student financial aid influence persistence (Cabrera et al., 1992; St. John et al., 1996). In general, these studies consistently found that financial aid has a significant effect on persistence, although they did not consider the differential effect of financial aid for students from various socioeconomic status backgrounds.

Several foundational economic studies of persistence examined the influence of various financial factors on students' analyses of the cost and benefits of earning a baccalaureate degree. Previous research

concluded that various forms of financial aid (i.e., grants, loans, and work-study) are positively associated with enrollment decisions (St. John, 1990), and persistence (Nora, 1990; St. John et al., 1991). Other studies focused on the influence of financial aid on cost and benefit analyses made by students from low-SES backgrounds. These considered the effectiveness of various financial aid sources on persistence and found that students from low-SES backgrounds are particularly responsive to changes in grant amounts, but not to changes in loan amounts (e.g., Astin, 1993; St. John, 1990).

Although these foundational studies helped to examine the effect of financial aid on persistence, they did not provide a complete understanding of the true nature of financial influences on persistence. For example, they failed to consider the influence of other factors that shape student departure decisions. Tinto (1986) argued that these studies emphasized the importance of individual finances and financial aid in students' educational attainment decisions, without consideration of the "social or nonpecuniary forces inside and outside institutions that color individual decisions regarding persistence" (p. 363). Additionally, St. John, Cabrera, Nora, and Asker (2000) indicated that some economic studies provided an incomplete understanding of the true nature of financial influences on persistence because they did not consider the interactions among all the important factors that influence persistence.

As noted by Cabrera et al. (1992), most finance studies typically include measures of other variables, such as precollege motivational factors, academic ability, demographic factors, socioeconomic status, and college performance, to "control for background or precollege sources of variance when assessing whether financial aid or combinations of student aid packages increase persistence" (p. 572), but failed to consider the interactive effects of the variables. Voorhees (1985) also highlighted the lack of research designs that understand the relationships among variables selected for research: "The result has been a profusion of 'stepwise' multiple regression analyses and multidiscriminant analyses that dissect, or pull apart, variables without regard to how they might work together to impact persistence rates" (p. 22). This lack of integration of financial factors into the research is critical given public investment in financial aid programs and the efforts of policymakers



and practitioners to understand how financial aid influences the entire persistence and degree attainment process (Cabrera et al.). These criticisms of finance studies have led to other studies that consider the interaction of financial aid programs with other variables that affect student persistence.

## Expanding the Economic Model

Previous studies on financial aid and educational attainment primarily have focused on the ability of financial aid to equalize educational opportunities by eliminating income differences (e.g., Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; St. John & Noell, 1989; Stampen & Cabrera, 1988) or the effectiveness of aid packages in promoting persistence (e.g., Bean, 1985; St. John, 1990; St. John et al., 1991; Stampen & Cabrera). Although these two lines of inquiry have offered important insights regarding the role of financial aid in equalizing educational opportunity or promoting persistence, they do not promote an understanding of how financial aid interacts with students' motivational and ability factors or institutional experiences (Cabrera, Stampen, & Hansen, 1990). Expanded economic models offer promise for both future persistence research and strategies for effective institutional practice.

St. John et al. (1991) used educational attainment models as a foundation for a conceptual model of the effects of student financial aid on persistence to degree completion. St. John et al. concluded that educational attainment models provided a basis for a logical extension of financial aid research to include the interaction of financial aid with other factors that influence persistence to degree attainment. For example, in addition to measures of financial aid, their model explicitly incorporated measures of academic integration (e.g., grades) as part of a student's educational experience and a measure of educational aspirations as an indicator of goal commitment. The model used by St. John et al. incorporated features from several areas of research to view degree attainment as a function of "social background, academic ability/achievement, high school experience, postsecondary aspirations, college experiences, and student financial aid" (St. John et al., p. 386).

Several studies have explored the effects of finances on persistence by incorporating economic factors in the context of noneconomic variables such as academic

skills, academic integration, social integration, and goal commitment (Cabrera et al., 1990, 1992; Nora, 1990; St. John et al., 1991). In one example, Cabrera et al. (1990) provided a model that is drawn from Tinto's (1975) student integration model, Bean's (1982) and Nora's (1987) findings regarding the influence of support from others on persistence, and Vorhees' (1985) research indicating that economic need negatively affects college academic performance. Their model added the element of ability to pay as a variable that directly affects students' decisions to persist in college. In addition, they hypothesized that financial variables also would have an indirect influence on persistence by moderating the effects of institutional commitment, goal commitment, academic performance, and institutional variables on students' decisions to remain at an institution. The results from the study did not indicate that ability to pay—defined in the study as satisfaction with cost of attendance and SES—moderated the effect of either academic performance or social interaction on a student's decision to persist. They did, however, report an interaction effect between students' ability to pay and goal commitment, providing support for Tinto's claim that external factors are likely to moderate the effect of goal and institutional commitments. In other words, Cabrera et al. (1990) supported the hypothesis that financial variables can influence the effect of educational aspirations, which contradicts a common assumption that an individual's commitment to complete college can overcome a lack of financial resources.

St. John et al. (1996) considered the need to merge economic models with student-institutional fit models. Their college choice-persistence nexus model described persistence as a three-stage process. In the first stage, students' predisposition to pursue a higher education degree is shaped through socioeconomic factors and academic ability. During the second stage, students next estimate the costs and benefits of attending college, which influence subsequent enrollment decisions. St. John et al. found that financial factors affected college choice during the second stage. Student entry into an institution represents the third stage, in which college characteristics, social experiences, and academic performance shape degree aspirations. Considering the third stage, St. John et al. found that finances interacted with academic and social experiences to shape students' calculations of the costs and benefits of their college experiences. In other words, students' reenrollment



decisions were shaped by both the quality and the cost of their college experiences. Overall, this nexus model indicated that financial factors influence both college choice and persistence decisions.

In another example of integrating financial variables with other factors that influence degree attainment, Cabrera et al. (1992) explored the indirect and direct effects of finances on persistence in the context of variables such as significant others' influence, precollege academic achievement, academic and social integration, goal and institutional commitments, and intent to persist. As noted by Cabrera et al., little effort has been placed on examining what role financial aid has in the college persistence process together with student's motivational and ability factors. Their model of student persistence posited that finances have a direct effect on persistence decisions while affecting students' social and academic experiences. The model also assumed that finances have a direct effect on academic integration, social integration, and institutional and goal commitments. The model posed by Cabrera et al. is important theoretically because it considers "What are the effects of student finances on college persistence when academic ability, motivational, and integration and commitment variables (as well as their underlying structural patterns) are simultaneously taken into account?" (p. 588). Their research effectively converged two separate lines of research that previously considered the role of financial and organizational factors in isolation. Cabrera et al. found support for the indirect influence of finances on the persistence process, demonstrating that financial aid can enhance factors that are associated with persistence such as academic performance, social interaction with other undergraduates, and desire to persist.

## College Persistence and Low-Socioeconomic Status

College students from lower-SES backgrounds face several barriers that can hamper their ability to complete their baccalaureate education. Before students begin postsecondary education, socioeconomic factors influence students' predisposition to attend college, search for potential institutions, and choice among institutions. For example, SES influences the likelihood that parents will talk to their children about college (Stage & Hossler, 1989), the level of parental

encouragement (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; McDonough, 1997), and the formation of postsecondary plans (Cabrera & La Nasa; King, 1996; Trusty, 2000). When searching for possible institutions to attend, students from low-SES backgrounds have fewer information sources about college (Tierney, 1980) and less knowledge of financial aid availability and qualification criteria (Olson & Rosenfeld, 1984; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). As students make choices among institutions, students from low-SES backgrounds are more sensitive to college costs and availability of financial aid (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). These students and their parents are less likely to have obtained information about or could estimate the cost of tuition and fees according to a U.S. Department of Education study (2003a) when compared with students and their parents from middle and higher income families. Additionally, they and their parents were unable to predict college costs as accurately as middle or higher income students and their parents (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a).

One of the most significant differences between students from low- and high-socioeconomic backgrounds is in their preparedness for college study. Terenzini et al. (2001) noted sharp contrasts in the academic achievement of high school seniors in the areas of reading, math, science, and social studies across SES quartiles. Other research has indicated a relationship between the level of high school curricula students complete and factors such as family background and socioeconomic status (Adelman, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Financial aid has been shown to have a positive effect on both college attendance (St. John, 1990), retention (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b) and on baccalaureate degree attainment (Cabrera et al., 1992). However, several studies have suggested that the shift in federal financial aid policies from gift aid to self-help aid, regardless of need, threatens equal access to educational opportunity (Fenske, Porter, & DuBrock, 2000; King, 1996). For example, the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act allowed for greater borrowing limits and established a loan program that is open to all students regardless of need. King explained that federal student loan programs are shifting their emphasis from creating access for financially disadvantaged students to broadening choice and enhancing convenience for middle class students.



At a time when students increasingly are concerned about affordability, the refocusing of financial aid from grants to loans has important implications for encouraging able students from low-SES backgrounds to pursue a college degree, including limiting their range of college choices and their experience once they enroll. Campaigne and Hossler (1998, p. 100) concluded, “As federal policy shifts from a reliance on grants to increased emphasis on loans, low- and moderate-income students are less likely to consider attending private colleges and universities. They may also be less likely to attend 4-year public institutions as residential students.” Living on campus can provide important experiences for students as Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996) have pointed out, which suggests that low-SES students’ lower likelihood of attending institutions as residential students may negatively impact their educational experiences. Moreover, as private borrowing increasingly becomes an option for students who require additional resources beyond the allowable maximum for federal loan programs, Wegmann, Cunningham, and Merisotis (2003) reported that students from families from the lowest income quartile were less likely to receive private loans than their middle-income counterparts.

The discussion of financial aid thus far concentrated on the impact of grants and loans. It is also important to note that work-study has a positive effect on persistence (Astin, 1975). Phipps and Merisotis (2003) reported that the connection between work-study and persistence is true for low-income students as well, noting that work-study was positively associated with higher grade point average and greater engagement in campus activities, which in turn impact persistence. In contrast to the positive effect of on-campus work-study positions, research indicates that full- or part-time, off-campus employment inhibits persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Based upon this research, it is apparent that on-campus work-study can assist students from low-SES backgrounds in overcoming barriers to persistence, while off-campus work may create additional barriers.

## Implications for Research

Previous researchers have offered important insights regarding ways to improve our understanding of the persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds. For example, Stage and Hossler (2000)

called for a comprehensive student-centered theory of persistence that combines elements of student background, school experiences, intentions, preparations, and college entry. This framework offers the promise of conceptualizing degree attainment as a continuous process rather than distinct phases such as college choice, college enrollment, and persistence. There is a need to expand economic models of persistence to consider not only the importance of individual finances and financial aid on degree attainment decisions, but also to examine the additional forces that interact with economic resources to impact degree attainment. Tinto (1986) explained that although it is clear that financial considerations are important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, there is little evidence to support the contention that economic forces are paramount in degree attainment once students are in college. Tinto suggested the need to expand economic models of persistence because previous research focused on the influence of finances on access rather than persistence, and it lacked an understanding of how finances related to long-term patterns of student departure.

Educators who wish to examine the influence of financial aid on persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds should consider the following strategies. First, it is important to examine how the relationship between financial factors and institutional experiences might vary by student background characteristics such as socioeconomic class. Previous research on financial aid and persistence often have controlled for SES differences, which limits the ability to understand the unique experiences of students from low-SES backgrounds. Secondly, as noted in this chapter, several studies have indicated that different forms of financial aid influence persistence in different ways. Therefore, researchers should continue to consider how different forms of financial aid contribute to degree attainment. Global measures of financial aid or students’ ability to pay may limit a detailed understanding of how financial aid influences students’ institutional experiences and indirectly influences degree attainment. Thirdly, although several studies empirically have demonstrated that financial aid in the form of grants has an influence on persistence, additional research may provide a grounded discussion about why this connection exists. Specifically, researchers need to understand how financial aid indirectly influences persistence through other factors such as motivation, academic achievement,



and academic and social engagement. Finally, future research should consider how institutional characteristics shape the experiences of students from low-SES backgrounds. For example, Anderson (1988) considered how factors such as the proportion of low-income students, the mean SAT score of the entering student class, selectivity, the proportion of students who live on campus, and the percentage of undergraduates who are enrolled part time influence student involvement, academic performance, goal commitment, and degree attainment.

## Implications for Practice

As was mentioned previously, students from low-SES backgrounds are sensitive to price increases in higher education. Additionally, they have to overcome a variety of barriers to be successful and complete their baccalaureate degree. However, financial aid can be used to assist students in overcoming the barriers they face. Because three forms of financial aid (i.e., grants, loans, and work) are available to students, institutions can develop strategies, informed by research, to package aid to maximize its effectiveness.

Various studies have determined that student financial aid in the form of grants can have a positive effect on student persistence. For example, need-based aid has been found to be important to students from low-SES backgrounds when they make enrollment decisions (Leslie & Brinkman, 1988; St. John, 1990). In one study, St. John et al. (2004) noted that a \$1,000 increase in need-based grant aid increased enrollment 11.5 percentage points, while the same increase in non-need grants resulted in an increased enrollment of 8.9 percentage points. St. John et al. concluded that the direct effects of need-based grants were much more substantial. Financial aid not only influences students' enrollment decisions (Paulsen & St. John, 1997) and persistence decisions (St. John et al., 1991), but the interaction between finances and academic and social experiences also influences degree attainment behaviors in positive ways. Astin (1993), for example, concluded that grant aid is the only form of financial aid that seems to have a measurable effect on student development. Terenzini et al. (2001) agreed and pointed out that students from low-SES backgrounds are more responsive to grants as opposed to loans and work-study programs.

Grants can have other desirable effects on students. They can have a positive influence on persistence (St. John et al., 1991), social integration (Astin, 1993), and grade point average (Cabrera et al., 1992). As a consequence, the implications for awarding financial aid are obvious. As institutions shape their financial aid program in the form of grants, they can have a positive influence on students' educational experiences and, ultimately, their persistence to graduation. This recommendation is supported by research conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office (1995), which found a 14% reduction in the dropout probability of students from low-SES backgrounds with an additional \$1,000 in grant aid. The same study found no significant effect for increases in loan aid.

Federal financial aid, increasingly, is taking the form of loans (The College Board, 2003), and the purchasing power of Pell Grants has eroded over time (The Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1999). As a consequence institutions have to explore alternative resources to develop strategies that will facilitate the persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds rather than look to the federal government for help in developing more robust grant programs. Among the available strategies are the following: (a) discounting tuition for students from low-SES backgrounds, (b) focusing current grant-based aid programs other than discounting programs on students from low-SES backgrounds, and (c) undertaking fund raising campaigns designed to endow grant-based aid programs for students from low-SES backgrounds. None of these prescriptions are easy in difficult economic times, when colleges and universities are strapped for resources (e.g., "The big squeeze," 2003). However, if the persistence to graduation of low-income students is a priority for colleges and universities, then more resources need to be identified to provide grant aid for students from low-SES backgrounds. As institutions consider these possible strategies, it is helpful to note that a report from the Lumina Foundation for Education showed that the standard practice of using institutionally-funded grants to defray college costs (tuition-discounting) for the general student population frequently fails to increase net revenue and student quality, while restricting the access to grant aid of students from low-SES backgrounds (Davis, 2003). Therefore, it seems likely that the three strategies outlined above can serve to promote postsecondary access and persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds.





Other strategies also could be employed to provide more grant aid for students from low-SES backgrounds by managing enrollment. Among them are admitting fewer students from low-SES backgrounds, thereby enabling an institution to be more generous with grant aid to those students from low-SES backgrounds who are admitted. Another is to admit more students who pay the full cost of admission, and as a consequence redirect some of the tuition dollars paid by them to students from low-SES backgrounds (Hill, Winston, & Boyd, 2003). Each of these strategies has drawbacks. In the case of the first approach, admitting fewer students from low-SES backgrounds hinders the objective of providing greater access for students from low-SES backgrounds and limits the socioeconomic diversity of the institution. In the case of the latter, admitting more full-paying students suggests that either some middle- or low-SES students will not be admitted to provide room for the students who are able to pay the full cost. A third approach is to reallocate grant aid from higher SES students to low-SES students. This may result, however, in limiting an institution's ability to attract students with unique talents (e.g., in the fine arts, athletics, or academics) who, instead may be recruited by other institutions willing to provide more grant aid to them.

## Conclusion

This chapter has summarized existing research on the relationship of financial aid with the persistence of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds beginning with several foundational studies and then reporting how student economic background interacts with other variables to provide special challenges for low-SES students. It is clear that packaging financial aid in the form of grants, regardless of the source, has a positive influence on the persistence of students from low-SES backgrounds. As a consequence, colleges and universities are urged to develop financial aid programs that emphasize grants because of their potency in helping students realize their goal of graduation.

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# *Measuring Undergraduate Hardiness as an Indicator of Persistence to Graduation Within Four Years*

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*This chapter makes a case for measuring first-year college students' hardiness upon their arrival to identify which undergraduates are most likely not to graduate four years later. The hardiness literature is reviewed. Labor-intensive persistence intervention programs are expensive. Enrolling only those who need them—regardless of demographic background—is most efficient. Blending undergraduate hardiness considerations into efforts that identify “at-risk” students avoids the uneconomical and demeaning simplification of characterizing all students from underrepresented populations as vulnerable. A two-campus longitudinal study of 471 first-year respondents revealed a correlation linking hardiness with persistence to graduation. Policy ramifications are discussed.*

**E**arly identification of students who have a high potential to drop out of college has become a key concern of faculty and administrators involved with improving retention. Creative intervention programs often incur expensive, labor-intensive costs. These initiatives would be more financially efficient if they were targeted only to those among the many new arrivals who are less likely to graduate in four years while exempting others who do not need them.

There might be an understandable temptation, for example, among administrators with concerns for building campus diversity to funnel underrepresented

student populations into these retention programs regardless of whether or not such undergraduates might need the support. After all, 45% of Black students, on average, drop out of college within six years in comparison to the 33% of White students who leave (Swail, 2004). On the other hand, this suggests that 55% of Black students, as persisters, do not need retention intervention programs.

Enrolling all members of certain student population subsets into campus retention intervention programs risks reducing the entire group into a demeaning stereotype that overlooks the variety of persistence skills found within it. Targeting entire subgroups for services

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also adds to the inefficiencies noted above by wasting retention energy on those students from underrepresented populations who do not need the help. One challenge for higher education administrators is to identify a practical mechanism that provides an early identification of “at-risk” students regardless of their background.

This report empirically tests the uncomplicated measurement of student hardiness as that user-friendly mechanism. The current study contributes to the expanding literature in two ways: (a) it is a rare use of hardiness as an independent variable in longitudinal research—particularly over a four-year period, and (b) it appears to be the first published linkage of hardiness as an independent variable to the dependent variable of undergraduate persistence found in a refereed venue.

Recognizing the complexity of the issue, theorists understandably posit sophisticated models that explain the variance in retention (e.g. Astin, 1982; Clewell, & Ficklen, 1986; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Typically, these models project the likelihood of retention by combining certain pre-college characteristics of high school students and their influence on individual commitments with both the formal and informal rhythms of their host campus. The traditional retention models are the long-term purview of university presidents and their boards of trustees. These approaches require sustained leadership commitment and significant resources over time to change the fundamental structure and culture of campus communities. Multivariate retention models, although quite helpful in their explanatory power, are not in tune with the needs of those higher education professionals working “in the trenches.” Middle managers do not have the resources, the time or, indeed, the mandate to implement transformational campus models that can align their institution in a profound way to the individual new student’s makeup, particularly during the crush of serving arriving newcomers.

Implicit in this current longitudinal research, however, is the hint of an alternative, “meantime” tactic to improve campus retention. While awaiting long-term transformational campus change, our alternative method would help those college officials who are responsible in the meantime for improving persistence to graduation within the often-inhospitable campus realities of the here and now. It acknowledges that

retention administrators must focus on individual students’ reaction to the host campus as they find it.

Retention administrators and faculty need a real-time, pragmatic technique that would identify entering at-risk students in the current environment upon their arrival. Testing for hardiness may be that technique. At-risk students of any background could then be placed immediately in appropriate intervention programs such as first-year seminars while campus policy makers address the long-term transformational issues outlined in the more elegant models.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Describing Hardiness: A Review of the Literature*

A substantial amount of psychological theory has focused on the human tendency to create and thrive during periods of change. Building on these schools of thought, Kobasa (1979) sought to describe a “hardy” person—one who welcomes and thrives during periods of stress. Hardiness can be defined as a personality style that influences ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world that lead to personal growth rather than debilitation—particularly during times of stress. Hardiness is based on a perceptual framework through which individuals see the world around them. This perceptual schema leads to growth-oriented cognition, emotion, and behavior. It is composed of three integrated components: commitment, challenge, and control.

“Commitment” is a sense of value, meaningfulness, and loyalty towards oneself and one’s purpose in life. It is expressed by deeply involving oneself in activities, relationships, and communities that are personally relevant (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982). Constructs that are similar to commitment, for example Antonovsky’s (1979) “sense of coherence” (p. 124), have been offered as mediators of the impact of stress. Specific commitment-related behaviors include developing a broad portfolio of life goals and regularly reviewing and reflecting upon them. College admissions officials often get glimpses of an applicant’s commitment component through their description of extra-curricular activities.

“Challenge” fosters a willingness to leave behind the status quo to develop and grow with a new set of circumstances. The basis of the challenge component is the belief that change is inevitable in life and should be welcomed. Those who have or develop challenge in their personality style will look upon a confusing series of events, such as the transition to campus life, as a puzzle to be solved rather than a storm to be weathered. Challenge leads to problem solving and searching for new experiences. From a challenge perspective, opportunity only comes through change (Kobasa, Maddi, & Courington, 1981; Kobasa et al., 1982). Specific challenge-related behaviors include developing a broad range of options in response to any new or threatening situation. Student inquiries about campus life activities or discussions with their faculty advisor about course registration options and alternative majors to pursue can offer an impression of the level of the challenge component in their overall hardiness.

“Control” is a belief in one’s ability to influence events. It is very similar to Rotter’s (1966) “belief in internal control” (p. 1) discussion within the locus-of-control construct. Internal control is the belief that one controls one’s destiny in life. Specific control-related behaviors include identifying and acting upon the most feasible of the options developed through the challenge behaviors. Student choices exercised in opting to join specific campus organizations or assertively registering for elective courses involve the control component of hardiness.

Hardiness can be seen as the theoretical development of Selye’s (1976) statement that “how you take it” (p. 74) determines whether a positive or negative outcome results from a stressor. Hardy persons tend to see stressors as changes that provide opportunities for growth towards attaining desired goals. Thus, individuals with a high level of hardiness attribute greater competence to themselves, appraise situations as having potentially positive outcomes such as graduating, and engage in problem-solving behavior to yield these outcomes (Bartone, 1989; Kobasa, 1979; Kobasa et al., 1982; Nowack, Gibbons, & Hanson, 1983). They generate and then choose among a variety of responses to a stressor.

Hardy persons further believe that they can control stressful situations. This perspective helps them thrive in, rather than succumb to, new circumstances. We view the first arrival at college as a demanding new

circumstance. It is what piqued our shared interest in exploring the potential linkage of hardiness to retention.

We believe the beginning of college is often a demanding new circumstance. The traditional new arrival to campus, perhaps not yet 18 years old, is suddenly thrust into different surroundings. The campus presents all the challenges of “learning the ropes,” navigating one’s way through unknown territory and integrating oneself into an unfamiliar environment. Its population—faculty, staff, administration, sophomores through seniors, and the citizenry of the broader locality—has a whole set of normative expectations of the newcomers that are already in place. These expectations are further complicated by the hopes and best wishes that members of the students’ hometowns—extended family members, friends and professionals such as seemingly supportive high school teachers—had expressed before the fall departure for campus. For some, these elements of the transition to college life may prove far more stressful than exciting. Less able to manage the transition, these students may be more at risk of dropping out. Seidman (1996), for example, urges college and university administrators to use the data at their institution’s disposal to develop student profiles of those who, historically, do not persist to graduation.

Our approach seeks to expand Seidman’s (1996) campus-by-campus focus on each community’s students to a more comprehensive attempt that can be applied to undergraduates in different settings. It emphasizes measuring students’ hardiness as they begin the higher education enterprise to determine their likelihood to transform possibly anomic current campus climates into arenas that enhance successful individual journeys toward graduation within four years. Targeting less-hardy students, regardless of their background, for enrollment in retention intervention programs might permit more efficient usage of these expensive, labor-intensive efforts that are best suited only for those who truly need them.

## Review of Hardiness Research

The reported research applications of hardiness are broad and growing. Respondent groups have included women survivors of sexual abuse (Feinauer, Mitchell, Harper, & Dane, 1996), children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Brooks, 1994), Idaho farm and

ranch families (Carson, Araquistain, Ide, Quoss, & Weigel, 1994), army disaster workers (Bartone, 1991), older adults (Magnani, 1990), executives (Maddi & Kobasa, 1984), bus drivers (Bartone, 1989), nurses (Harris, 1989), immigrants (Kuo & Tsai, 1986), student affairs administrators (Berwick, 1992), and adolescents (Hannah & Morrissey, 1987), among others.

Williams, Wiebe, and Smith (1992), for example, found among 139 undergraduate respondents sampled from an introductory psychology course that

Hardiness was found to be positively related to problem-focused and support-seeking coping and negatively related to wishing and avoidant coping. Thus, individuals high in hardiness are more likely to report engaging in what are traditionally interpreted as adaptive coping behaviors and less likely to report engaging in more maladaptive coping practices. These data are consistent with the hypothesis that hardiness has a positive influence on one's general strategies for managing experienced stress. (p. 250)

Our research uniquely adds first-year students as a respondent group. We measured their hardiness just as they arrived on campus. The problem-focused and support-seeking coping behavior found among the hardy undergraduates studied by Williams and her colleagues might well serve these new arrivals well as they begin what should be seen as a potentially stressful transition to college life.

Dependent variables in hardiness-focused studies have included overall health and job stress (Sharpley, Dua, Reynolds, & Acosta, 1999), war-related stress (Bartone, 1999), drug use (Maddi, Wadhwa, & Haier, 1996), basketball performance (Maddi & Hess, 1992), burnout (Pierce & Molloy, 1990), and work performance (Westman, 1990).

There also is a focus on the linkages of hardiness with measurements of general well being. Manning Williams, and Wolfe (1989), for example, examined this correlation among 468 workers sampled from two firms involved in health insurance and manufacturing respectively. Although their empirical research did find a statistically significant correlation of hardiness with emotional and psychological factors thought to be

related to personal well being and work performance, correlation does not indicate causation so they were reluctant to assert which might cause the other. In contrast, the Lambert, Lambert, Klipple, and Mewshaw (1989) found that hardiness and satisfaction with social support did serve as predictors of psychological well-being among 122 women with rheumatoid arthritis.

Our research uniquely adds persistence to graduation as a longitudinal dependent variable. The campus analogs to the kinds of social support intervention programs discussed by Lambert et al., (1989) such as First-Year seminars and intensified academic advising, are expensive and labor intensive. Given their costs, it might prove more efficient to aim these intervention programs at those students who are less hardy.

The current research focus on creating an uncomplicated mechanism to identify at-risk students is timely. Early in 2003, the Bush administration floated the notion of establishing a grant program for institutions that retain students and graduate them on time. Pennsylvania established a \$6 million grant program to reward institutions that graduated at least 40% of their in-state residents within 4 years. To date, not one Pennsylvania public college or university has qualified for the money (Swail, 2004).

Undergraduate retention is also a noteworthy concern in the popular press. College guides often list persistence rates in each campus profile. *Time Magazine* recently used the quality of campus retention programs as the sole criterion for its "Colleges of the Year" selections (McGrath, 2001).

The purpose of this research is to explore the viability of hardiness as a predictor of college student retention. Earlier, a pilot longitudinal study at Ithaca College (Lifton, & Flanagan, 1995), using a 30-item, multiple-choice questionnaire (Bartone, 1991), found a positive correlation between student hardiness and persistence to graduation. The sample, however, was small and homogeneous in nature, made up of 189 mostly White students all majoring in business disciplines. Further research was needed to determine if the approach would be applicable to other types of student population subsets and different campus settings.



## Method

As interest in the construct develops, hardiness methodologists will need to reach some consensus on how to assess it: “Unfortunately, there now exists nearly as many ways to measure hardiness and its subcomponents as there are people conducting research on the topic. Obviously, if progress is to be made in this area, this practice must stop” (Hull, Van Treuren, & Virnelli, 1987, p. 521).

### *Instrumentation*

Hoping to create an “. . . improved measure that is grounded conceptually in the original work on the hardiness construct but . . . corrects the psychometric limitations of the earlier measure(s),” Bartone (1991, p. 2) developed, tested, and reported the use of a 30-item instrument in 13 samples. Beyond the attraction of being able to compare undergraduate respondents’ hardiness scores with different studies, we also found the Bartone instrument to be an appealing one because of its brevity—only 30 items, 10 each devoted to creating sub-indices for commitment,

challenge, and control. One of the 10 assertions used to create the commitment sub-index, for example, reads, “Most days, life is really interesting and exciting to me.” Among the challenge statements, one states “Changes in routine are interesting to me.” The control sub-index is created from 10 declarations including “Planning ahead can help avoid most future problems.”

For each item, the respondent chooses one reply from four options arrayed in a Likert-type scale indicating whether the statement in question is either “not at all true,” “a little true,” “quite true,” or “completely true” with an assigned score ranging from zero through three respectively. Thus, each aggregated subscale can vary in scores between a low of zero and a high of 30. Hardiness scores, the summation of the three sub-indices, can stretch, therefore, from zero to a high of 90.

In our research, the principal investigator in the initial Ithaca College pilot study collaborated in fall 1997 with colleagues then at Widener University and Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) to replicate that exploration with a larger, more diverse student

Table 1  
Comparison of Mean Hardiness Scores in Different Campus Studies

| Institution                               | Year | N   | Mean  | Std. Dev. |
|---|------|-----|-------|-----------|
| College of William & Mary <sup>a</sup>    | 1990 | 164 | 61.56 | 6.42      |
| Ithaca College <sup>b</sup>               | 1991 | 180 | 59.11 | 7.11      |
| MVSU <sup>c</sup>                         | 1997 | 192 | 59.11 | 7.40      |
| Widener University <sup>c</sup>           | 1997 | 279 | 57.87 | 7.48      |
| MVSU <sup>d</sup>                         | 1998 | 198 | 57.84 | 7.21      |
| Texas A&M, Kingsville <sup>d</sup>        | 1998 | 92  | 55.28 | 7.39      |
| Mississippi State University <sup>d</sup> | 1998 | 512 | 55.19 | 7.26      |
| Elon University <sup>d</sup>              | 1998 | 443 | 56.56 | 7.29      |
| Pacific Lutheran University <sup>d</sup>  | 1998 | 187 | 59.05 | 7.03      |

*Note.* The 1999 article reports the baseline profile of the current study. The overall mean hardiness score across both campuses (n=471) is 58.38 with a standard deviation of 7.46. <sup>a</sup>Bartone, 1991; <sup>b</sup>Lifton & Flanagan, 1995; <sup>c</sup>Lifton et al., 2000, <sup>d</sup>Lifton et al., 2002.

population. Located in Chester, Pennsylvania, Widener is a typical small-sized university of more than 2,000 undergraduates, augmented by an almost equal number of part-time students, none of whom were part of this study. MVSU, in Itta Bena, Mississippi, is a member of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) network. Registration typically approaches 2,000 students in its full-time undergraduate population.

We believed that the target respondents, arriving college students collectively bred on sound bites within an "MTV culture," might have less patience than others for accurately answering a questionnaire that took more time than Bartone's 30-item, multiple choice instrument. Since we conducted our study, an even briefer 18-item survey shows great promise in recent test environments (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2001).

Bartone's (1991) questionnaire, slightly reworded for an undergraduate respondent base, was distributed to 471 full-time, first-year students early in their fall 1997 semester, 192 (40.8% of the total) at Mississippi Valley State University and 279 (59.2% of the total) at Widener University. Demographic data about each respondent were added to the data sets. These respondents' persistence to their expected graduation, four academic years later in spring 2001, was monitored to retest the pilot study hypothesis that less hardy students would be disproportionately higher among those who drop out. This study reports the results of the longitudinal research.

### *The "Baseline" Revisited*

Our cross-sectional baseline study of the database has already been published (Lifton, Seay, & Bushko, 2000). The mean hardiness score was 58.38 ( $n=471$ ) across the two campuses with a standard deviation of 7.46. Table 1 compares the current study's mean hardiness scores, disaggregated by campus, with the initial Ithaca College pilot study (Lifton, & Flanagan, 1995), one conducted at the College of William and Mary (W&M) by Bartone (1991), the original instrument's creator, and baseline data from a currently ongoing longitudinal study taking place on five campuses (Lifton, Seay, McCarly, Olive-Taylor, Seeger, & Bigbee, 2002).

While the William and Mary campus involved undergraduates from all four class cohorts, the other

studies focused exclusively on arriving first-year students. The higher mean hardiness score at William and Mary may reflect a disproportionate dropping out of less hardy W&M students who thus are not captured in the sample by their upper-class years (Lifton & Flanagan, 1995). The statistically significant gender and racial composition variations between Widener and MVSU was in keeping with the typical historical pattern on each campus (Lifton et al., 2000).

The most striking finding in the baseline analysis, however, was the statistically significant different hardiness scores of the sample's Black females. Only their mean hardiness score (59) rose above the average, while the means for Black men and all White students fell below. Moreover, 23% of the Black females sampled had high hardiness scores (beyond one standard deviation above the mean) compared to 15% of all others. Only 7% of Black females scored in the low range (below one standard deviation), compared to 17% of all other students (Lifton et al., 2000).

The demographic breakdowns of race and gender highlighted the baseline study's more interesting speculations when they were correlated with hardiness and the more typical admissions criteria of SAT scores and high school rank in class:

[W]hite men did disproportionately well in one area, SAT scores, and poorly in the other, rank in class. Any prediction, therefore, that Widener's persistence to graduation rate will be enhanced by the larger number of better SAT scoring White men on its campus would be moderated by their lower achievements in high school rank.

[B]lack women were disproportionately more likely to have higher high school ranks but lower SAT scores. Any prediction, therefore, that MVSU's persistence to graduation rate will be enhanced by the larger number of better high school ranking Black women on its campus would be moderated by their lower SAT scores.

[H]ardiness may be the variable that resolves the contradiction found in the analysis of SAT scores versus high school rank in class. ... (O)ne might speculate that Black females, as a more hardy subset, will prove disproportionately more likely

to persist than other subsets in the sample thus giving the advantage to MVSU in the persistence “competition” artificially created here. (Lifton et al., 2000, p. 79)

Indeed, it could be argued that the “double whammy” American societal challenges of being both Black and female deter some African American young women from even applying to college in the first place unless they have the hardiness in high school to overcome the sociological obstacles that they, as a group, might confront. Hardiness of Black women who pursue postsecondary education should continue to serve them well throughout their undergraduate years. Thus, the previously published baseline discussion projected two fundamental hypotheses, synthesized below, to be tested in this longitudinal study:

*Hypothesis 1.* Undergraduate hardiness, measured as students begin their first year on campus, will correlate positively 4 years later with their persistence to graduation.

*Hypotheses 2.* Given their higher mean hardiness score, rates of graduation within 4 years will be highest among Black women.

## Results

Four years after the respondents completed the hardiness survey upon their arrival at college, only 28% (n=132) of the 471 students sampled across both campuses graduated “on time.” Almost half, 46% (n=218), had dropped out, while the remaining 26% (n=121) remained enrolled for continuing coursework.

Widener University had both the higher graduation and dropout rates. Over half, 52.7%, of the Widener undergraduates had dropped out compared to 37% at MVSU. Almost a third, 32.3% of the Widener students, graduated within the 4-year period. In contrast, just over a fifth, 21.9%, of the MVSU students graduated on time. Remarkably, 41% of sampled MVSU students had neither dropped out nor graduated within four years; they remained enrolled. The comparative figure for Widener was only 15.1%. These differences proved statistically significant at the .001 level.

The mean hardiness scores, harvested 4 years earlier upon their arrival to campus for each of the three student groups (i.e., new alumni, dropouts, and those still persisting) supported our first hypothesis at the .01 level of statistical significance. The graduates

Table 2  
Four Years Later—Enrollment Status by Race/Gender Categories

| Four Years Later | White Male | White Female | Black Male | Black Female | TOTAL |
|------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Graduated        | 22         | 36           | 13         | 35           | 106   |
|                  | 24.4%      | 48.0%        | 14.3%      | 28.0%        | 27.8% |
| Remain Enrolled  | 17         | 8            | 37         | 45           | 107   |
|                  | 18.9%      | 10.7%        | 40.7%      | 36.0%        | 28.1% |
| Dropped out      | 51         | 31           | 41         | 45           | 168   |
|                  | 56.7%      | 41.3%        | 45.1%      | 36.0%        | 44.1% |
| TOTAL            | 90         | 75           | 91         | 125          | 381   |
|                  | 100%       | 100%         | 100%       | 100%         | 100%  |

Note.  $p < .001$

averaged 60.17 on the measure of hardiness. Dropouts averaged 57.44. Those who remained enrolled collectively scored a mean of 58.11, just shy of the total sample average of 58.38. The standard deviations for each group were 7.11, 7.53, and 7.43 respectively. These results support the first hypothesis.

The statistically significant racial and gender breakdown of enrollment status 4 years out, displayed in Table 2, relates to our second hypothesis regarding the disproportionately higher number of hardy Black females. These data help explain why the Widener subset had both the higher graduation and dropout rates. While 28% of the typically more hardy Black women graduated within 4 years, a percentage in keeping with the overall sample, their dropout rate was noticeably lowest among the four groupings. Instead, 36% returned to campus beyond the fourth year. Not surprisingly, only 11.2% of all Black female undergraduates in our sample studied at Widener. The Black female pattern, with their noteworthy enrollment continuation for many beyond 4 years disproportionately influences the overall picture of the experience found at MVSU. Although the same analysis might be said of the Black male experience, such a conclusion would need to be moderated by the comparatively high dropout rate among them.

Thus, the longitudinal results suggest that our second hypothesis giving primacy to graduation success among Black females needs recrafting to expand its emphasis beyond a 4-year graduation horizon. Instead, a combined focus on continuing persistence as well as graduation may well be seen as a positive student outcome associated with hardy personalities.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The notion that hardiness might help explain positive student persistence outcomes also ironically adds a new explanatory tool for a cause of some concern among certain higher education administrators. They are dealing with the phenomenon that the majority of undergraduates take more than 4 years to graduate. Nationally, for example, only 39% of the 1999-2000 cohort took 4 years or less to earn their diploma. Specifically, those who had not interrupted their postsecondary enrollment longer than 6 months averaged 4 years and 7 months (55 months) to earn their bachelor's degree. Private, not-for-profit

campuses, like Widener University, averaged 51 months. Their sister public institutions, like Mississippi Valley State University, posted a 57-month average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Only one third of the University of Texas system's students, for example, graduated within four years. The statistic for the state universities of Colorado, Washington, and California at Los Angeles (UCLA) are 38%, 42% and 42% respectively (Wingert, 2004). As they linger, these extended persisters take up valuable resources and space, thus limiting the size of the new entering class to be recruited.

It may very well be that their average higher hardiness disproportionately helps "protect" Black females from completely dropping out. They challenge higher education administrators, however, who simultaneously want to help educate them while making room, through timely graduation, for their successors.

This study's longitudinal results have provocative ramifications for higher education retention policy. The possibility that a simple tool, a 30-item hardiness questionnaire, could identify students at risk of not graduating within 4 years would give most empiricists, including the current researchers, pause. Any explanation that focused inordinately on a single, statistically significant finding of a bivariate correlation of hardiness with retention could demean the issue in oversimplification.

What such a finding does offer, however, is a possible approach for the "meantime." Retention administrators might consider emulating one quality of successful private, for-profit companies studied by Peters and Waterman (1982), that is, "A Bias for Action" (p. 119), rather than wait through the meantime for any of the previously discussed multivariate persistence models of comprehensive campus reform to be implemented. Focusing current retention efforts—perhaps as a pilot project—exclusively on the least hardy students, regardless of their demographic background, may prove to be a helpful and cost-effective interim measure.

Of course, one could suggest that a hardiness retention model might be used instead as an admissions criterion to weed out possible future dropouts altogether from the entering class. This seems unlikely for at least three reasons:

1. It is unethical and runs counter to the undergraduate instruction mission of American higher education institutions.

2. Pragmatically, it would become a public relations nightmare for any college if their use of such an admission screen leaked out.

3. Cynically, the need for “making the numbers” on a sufficient quantity of new enrollees to contribute their tuition dollars to annual operating budget revenues makes it financially far more prudent to admit less hardy students and then find ways to help them achieve their graduation goals.

Before campus administrators use a simple hardiness test to identify at-risk students, the justifying findings reported should first be confirmed by further research. To that end, we are engaged in a reiteration of the study. We are assembling a larger database (Lifton et al., 2002) across five college campuses consisting of respondents to the hardiness questionnaire who first matriculated in fall 1998. We hope to repeat the empirical longitudinal analysis on an even more diverse sample three-fold the size of this study, including a noteworthy number of Hispanics, to determine if similar results are found 4 years later at their expected graduation in spring 2002.

We anticipate that the reiteration beyond the pilot study and this research will confirm the current findings. If true, measuring undergraduates’ hardiness upon their arrival would then hold promise as an effective, user-friendly procedure to identify which new students, regardless of their background, need the nurturing attention of the labor-intensive, expensive intervention programs already shown to help them persist to graduation.

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# *The Importance of a Good Start*

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*Graduation rates of developmental education students from the University of Minnesota are strongly associated with students' first-year grade point averages (GPAs). Academic aptitude rating (AAR) scores account for less than 2% of the variability in developmental education students' first-year GPAs, but class attendance is strongly associated with students' academic success. These results indicate that (a) students' first-semester and first-year GPAs are strong predictors of students' probability of graduating from the university, and (b) AAR scores are poor predictors of developmental education students' first-semester GPAs, first-year GPAs, and graduation rates from the university.*

University administrators and faculty spend large amounts of money, time, and energy studying factors that predict students' academic success. These studies have examined a wide range of topics (Tinto, 1975), including personality and aptitude (Baird, 1984), stress and social class (Barney, Fredericks, & Fredericks, 1984), self-esteem and critical thinking (Bassarar, 1991; Berenson, Best, Stiff, & Wasik, 1990), academic autonomy and motivation (Higbee & Thomas, 1999; Thomas & Higbee, 2000), and scores on standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT (Arbona & Novy, 1990; Moore, Jensen, Hsu, & Hatch, 2002; Young & Sowa, 1992). Although these studies have often been informative, most of them have failed to help me answer the question that is asked of me most often by entering freshmen, "What can I do to succeed at the university?"

Providing effective answers to this question is especially important for education students participating in developmental education programs, who are at risk because they lack some of the academic skills and experiences that are often associated with academic success in college. Such "at-risk" students are becoming increasingly common at colleges and universities in the United States. For example, more than one-third of students in many states who have earned academic scholarships have to take developmental courses when they start college (Schouten, 2003), and 35% of the students who in 2000 entered 2- and 4-year public and private institutions in the United States took at least 1 year of remedial courses. For comparison, 28% spent that much time in remedial courses in 1995 (Cavanagh, 2003b; Remedial education, 2003).

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In this study I examined how “getting off to a good start”—that is, how earning good grades in their first semester—is associated with the subsequent academic performances of developmental education students. I wanted to answer several questions. For example, how effectively do students’ first semester GPAs predict their second semester GPAs? How effectively do students’ first semester GPAs predict their first-year (i.e., cumulative) GPAs? What are these students’ chances of graduating from the university? This study was supplemented by a corresponding analysis of how developmental education students’ academic aptitude ratings (AAR, which equals a student’s high school graduation percentile rank plus two-times his or her ACT composite score) are associated with students’ grades during their first year of college. Do either of these factors accurately predict students’ academic success?

## Methods

This study was conducted in the General College (GC) at the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota. GC is developmental education program that prepares students to transfer to one of the university’s degree-granting colleges. Many students in GC are considered to be at risk because they have lower high school grades and ACT scores than most other students at the university. Courses in GC are credit-bearing, content-rich courses that count fully toward graduation from the university.

### *Students in the Study*

In the fall of 2002, GC enrolled 896 new students (from a pool of 4,576 applicants to GC) who had an average ACT composite score of 20. Students in GC had an average age of 20. These students were 47% female and 53% male and had the following ethnic diversity: 17% African American, 2% American Indian, 16% Asian American, 4% Chicano or Latina, 58% Caucasian, and 3% Other (*Facts and figures*, 2003).

### *Students’ GPAs and Graduation Rates*

I used institutional data to determine AAR scores, first-semester GPA, second-semester GPA, and first-year (i.e., cumulative) GPA for each of the 896 students. I excluded students who dropped out of the university during their first year, as well as students for whom I

could not calculate an AAR (i.e., students whose records did not include an ACT composite score or a high school graduation percentile rank). I also used institutional data to determine how GC students’ first-year GPAs are associated with their graduation rates from the university. I did this by examining the first-year GPAs of all GC students who have graduated from the university between 1995 and 2003 (Office of Research and Evaluation, 2003).

### *Attendance Rates*

To determine the importance of class attendance to students’ academic success, I tracked the attendance rates and grades of all of the students who entered GC in the fall of 2002 who took introductory biology (GC 1131: Principles of Biological Science) during the 2002-2003 academic year. This course was chosen because it enrolls a large percentage of GC’s first-year students. This subset of 263 students had an ACT composite score of 21, an average age of 20, and the same gender and ethnic diversity as the entire entering class.

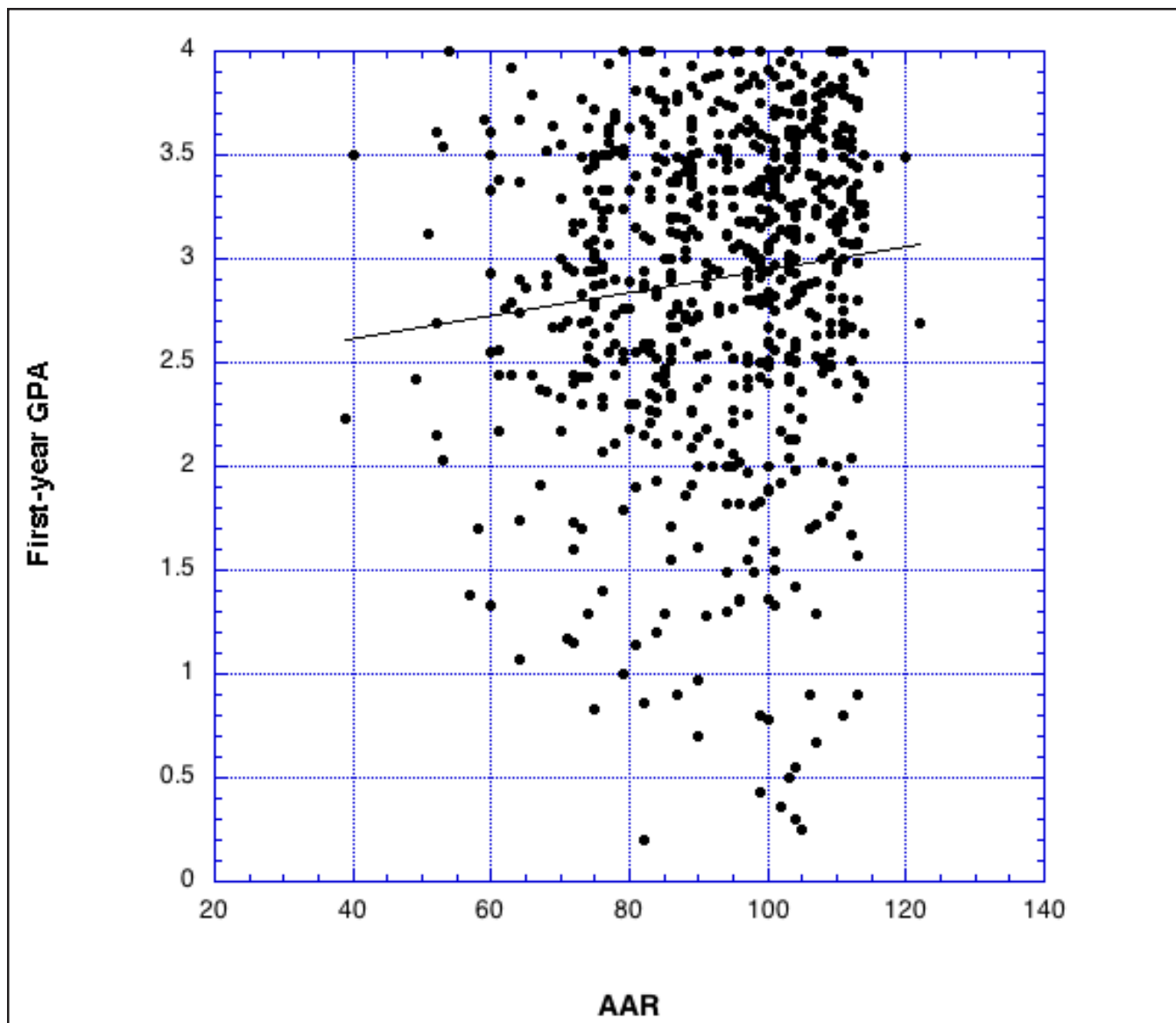
All sections of the four-credit biology course were offered near mid-day and were taught by the same instructor in the same classroom in the same way (e.g., the same textbook, syllabus, pedagogical techniques, grading policies, exams). Class attendance was recorded in every class. All exams covered material presented both in class and in the required course textbook. Missing class did not prevent any student from earning an A, for students could have made an A on each exam if they had read and understood the assigned readings in the textbook. No grades were curved, students were not allowed to retake any exams, and there were no extra-credit projects. Final grades were based entirely on students’ abilities to demonstrate their mastery of the course’s academic content and skills. No points were awarded for excellent attendance, and no points were deducted for poor attendance. Students who failed the course because of academic dishonesty were not included in this subset; most of these students stopped coming to class after being told that they would fail the course because of their cheating. Additional information about students’ performances in the course and their attitudes about class attendance and grades are presented elsewhere (Moore, 2003, in press a, in press b).

The University of Minnesota has the following policy regarding class attendance: “Students are expected to attend all meetings of their courses” (Policies, 2002). The course syllabus emphasized that policy with the following statement: “I expect you to prepare for and attend every class. This is important because class attendance is usually a strong indicator of course performance.” On the first day of class I discussed and emphasized this information.

AAR Scores

Figure 1 shows the association of developmental education students’ AAR scores and first-year GPAs. These variables had a correlation coefficient of 0.11 and a coefficient of determination of 0.01. AAR scores and first-semester GPAs had a correlation coefficient of 0.11, and AAR scores and second-semester GPAs had a correlation coefficient of 0.15.

Figure 1. The association of AAR scores and the first-year GPAs of developmental education students at the University of Minnesota. The equation for these data is  $y = 2.40 + 0.006x$ , and the correlation coefficient is 0.11.



## GPA's

Of the 896 students in this study, 13% earned GPAs lower than 2.0 during their first semester, and 22% earned GPAs lower than 2.0 during their second semester. After their first year of college, 17% of the students had cumulative GPAs less than 2.0. Between the first and second semester, 7% of the students in this study withdrew from the university for nonacademic reasons (e.g., illness, finances). These students had an average GPA of 3.0.

The association of students' first-semester GPAs and their first-year GPAs is shown in Table 1. First-semester GPAs and first-year GPAs had a correlation coefficient of 0.85 and a coefficient of determination of 0.73. First-semester GPAs and second-semester GPAs had a correlation coefficient of 0.59 and a coefficient of determination of 0.35. Most students who earned first-semester GPAs less than 2.0 also earned second-semester and first-year GPAs less than 2.0. Only 16% of students who earned first-semester GPAs of at least 2.0 posted second-semester GPAs less than 2.0.

Only 9% of the students who had first-semester GPAs equal to or above 2.0 ended their first year of

college with a GPA less than 2.0. However, 43% of students whose first-semester GPAs were below 2.0 earned second-semester GPAs of at least 2.0. Thirteen percent of students who had first-semester GPAs less than 1.0 had first-year GPAs of at least 2.0; this percentage rose to 36% for students who had first-semester GPAs between 1.0 and 2.0. First-semester GPAs and second-semester GPAs had a correlation coefficient of 0.59 and a coefficient of determination of 0.35.

Of the students who ended their first year of college with GPAs less than 2.0, 46% earned GPAs less than 2.0 in both their first and second semesters. Only 12% of students who ended their first year of college with a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 posted a GPA less than 2.0 during one previous semester.

## Grades and Attendance Rates

Table 2 shows the association of students' first-semester GPAs with their attendance rates and grades in the introductory biology course. Students' first-semester GPAs were strongly associated with high rates of class attendance (correlation coefficient = 0.51, coefficient of determination = 0.25) and with high

Table 1  
First-Semester GPAs and Subsequent Academic Performances of Developmental Education Students at the General College

| First-Semester GPA | Percentage of Students | Percentage with Second-Semester GPA < 2.0 | Percentage with First-Year GPA < 2.0 |
|--------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 0.00 - 0.99        | 4                      | 70  | 87                                   |
| 1.00 - 1.99        | 9                      | 52  | 64                                   |
| 0.00 - 1.99 Total  | 13                     | 57  | 70                                   |
| 2.00 - 2.49        | 13                     | 43  | 36                                   |
| 2.50 - 2.99        | 23                     | 27  | 18                                   |
| 3.00 - 3.49        | 27                     | 7   | 2                                    |
| 3.50 - 4.00        | 24                     | 3   | 1                                    |
| 2.00 - 4.00 Total  | 87                     | 16  | 9                                    |

grades in the course (correlation coefficient = 0.68). In contrast, AAR scores and class attendance had a correlation coefficient of 0.09 and a coefficient of determination of 0.01.

### Graduation Rates

Table 3 shows the graduation rates over an 8-year period from 1995 to 2003 of GC students having various first-year GPAs. GC students who had first-year GPAs lower than 2.0 comprised only about 1% of GC's graduates from the university during this time period. For comparison, students who had first-year GPAs above 3.0 comprised 59% of the GC students who graduated from the university (Office of Research and Evaluation, 2003).

## Discussion

Do students' first-semester GPAs accurately predict their second-semester and first-year GPAs? Yes.

1. Most students who earned first-semester GPAs above 2.0 also earned second-semester GPAs above 2.0. That is, most students who get off to a good start (i.e., earn first-semester GPAs above 2.0) continue to do well in their second semester.

2. Conversely, almost 60% of students who earned first-semester GPAs lower than 2.0 also earned second-semester GPAs lower than 2.0 (Table 1). That

is, most students who get off to a poor start (i.e., earn first-semester GPAs lower than 2.0) continue to do poorly in their second semester. Although first-semester GPAs lower than 2.0 and the accompanying letters about academic probation and possible dismissal from the university would presumably be a loud "wake-up call," most students who get such letters do not wake up.

3. Fewer than one-third of the students who earned first-semester GPAs lower than 2.0 ended their first year of college with cumulative GPAs above 2.0. Thus, even if students do heed the "wake-up call" caused by failing grades during their first semester, most usually do not raise their overall GPA enough to avoid being dismissed from the university at the end of their first year of college.

These data indicate that developmental education students' first-semester GPAs are usually an accurate predictor of students' second-semester grades and first-year GPAs (Table 2). Moreover, developmental education students' first-year GPAs are accurate indicators of students' probability of graduating from the university (Table 3).

### First Year GPAs and Graduation Rates

Do students' first-year GPAs accurately predict students' chances of graduation from the university? Yes. Developmental education students' probabilities of graduating from the university improve in proportion

Table 2  
The Association of General College Students' First-Semester GPAs, Average Attendance Rates, and Average Grades in an Introductory Biology Course

| First Semester GPA | Biology Course Attendance Rate (%) | Biology Course Grade (%) |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3.50-4.00          | 84                                 | 85                       |
| 3.00-3.49          | 77                                 | 77                       |
| 2.50-2.99          | 68                                 | 72                       |
| 2.00-2.49          | 64                                 | 69                       |
| 1.00-1.99          | 58                                 | 65                       |
| 0.00-0.99          | 36                                 | 49                       |

to their first-year GPAs; the higher a student's first-year GPA, the higher his or her chance of graduating from the university. Although some students having low first-year GPAs may later transfer to and graduate from a different institution, their odds of graduating from their original university (in this case, the University of Minnesota) decline in proportion to their first-year GPA (Table 3).

Although students having first-year GPAs equal to or slightly above 2.0 can remain in college, they remain at risk, for their GPAs provide little or no cushion for the "transfer shock" (i.e., lower grades) that often later accompanies their transfer to other colleges (Best & Gehring, 1993; Graham & Dallam, 1986; Graham & Hughes, 1994). This transfer shock helps explain why developmental education students who have the best starts (i.e., who earn the highest first-year GPAs) have the highest rates of graduation from the university. If developmental education students strive for and are satisfied with first-year GPAs of only 2.0 (as many of my students tell me they are), their subsequent GPAs will likely drop below 2.0 and result in suspension from the university when the students transfer to other colleges within the University of Minnesota. Students with higher first-year GPAs can withstand the shock of transferring to other colleges, but students having marginal GPAs (i.e., near 2.0) cannot, and consequently seldom graduate from the university (Table 3).

### *AAR Scores and First Semester GPAs*

Many universities, including the University of Minnesota, use algebraic formulae such as AAR scores as an admissions criterion, presumably because such

scores are effective predictors of students' academic success. Although some studies have reported that standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT accurately predict students' college grades (Nettles, Theony, & Gosman, 1986), others have reported that they do not (Allen, 1999; Arbona & Novy, 1990; Cloud, 2001; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1989; Young & Sowa, 1992). For the 896 students who entered GC in the fall of 2002, the correlation of students' AAR scores and first-year GPAs was weak. Indeed, variability in students' AAR scores accounted for only about 1% of the variability in students' first-year GPAs. Although AAR scores above 110 may correlate with higher grades in college (Moore, in press-a, b), most developmental education students have AAR scores significantly below 110 (Figure 1). For these students, AAR scores are unreliable predictors of academic success; they are also unreliable predictors of students' rates of class attendance, which are effective predictors of students' academic success (Table 2). Data presented in Figure 1 are not consistent with the claim that standardized academic aptitude and achievement tests such as the ACT are effective for predicting the college potential of developmental education students. (Brothen & Wambach, 2003).

### *Attendance and GPA*

Do students' rates of class attendance accurately predict students' first-year GPAs? In the large introductory biology course studied here, students' first-semester GPAs were strongly associated with their rates of class attendance. Although some researchers have argued that students' grades are unrelated to class attendance (Berenson, Carter, & Norwood, 1992; Borland & Howsen, 1998; Devadoss & Foltz, 1996;

Table 3  
The Relation of First-Year GPAs and Graduation Rates Over Eight Years for General College Students at the University of Minnesota

| First-Year GPA | Percentage of Students | Percentage of GC Graduates From 1995 to 2003 |
|----------------|------------------------|--|
| 0.00 - 1.99    | 18                     | 1  |
| 2.00 - 2.49    | 15                     | 11   |
| 2.50 - 2.99    | 25                     | 29   |
| 3.00 - 4.00    | 42                     | 59   |

Feldman, Carney, & Schloman, 1998; Hammen & Kelland, 1994; Thompson & Plummer, 1979), other studies agree with the conclusion presented here that class attendance is important for the academic success of developmental education students (Martin 1989; Moore, 2003; Thomas & Higbee, 2000; Wyatt, 1992). As Thomas and Higbee (2000) have noted, “Nothing replaces being present in class” (p. 229). Additional information about the association of class attendance and grades of developmental education students is presented elsewhere (Moore, 2003, in press a, in press b).

## Recommendations

1. Developmental education programs should use mandatory summer orientation programs and meetings with academic advisors to convince students of the importance of getting off to a good start at college. The message for students is simple: If you make poor grades during your first semester, you are probably going to flunk out of the university, and you almost certainly are not going to graduate from the university. If you want to stay in college and later enjoy the many advantages and options offered by a college degree, you need to get off to a good start. Merely getting a 2.0 GPA during your first year of college probably will not be enough to save you later when you transfer to another college and take upper-division courses. To boost your chances of graduating from the university, you need first-semester and first-year GPAs of at least 3.0.

2. Developmental education programs should use mandatory summer orientation programs and meetings with academic advisors to convince students that the best way to get off to a good start in college is to attend and actively participate in all of their classes. Developmental education students who attend all of their classes usually make significantly higher grades than students who skip classes (Moore, 2003, in press a, in press b). Although some other students may have academic skills and experiences that enable them to overcome poor class attendance, developmental education students usually do not. That is, class attendance and an active engagement with the course material are especially important for the academic success of developmental education students. Although many first-year students ignore announcements on the first day of classes that they should come to class (Moore, 2003), the course-related behaviors (including

class attendance) and grades of 15% to 20% of students usually improve when they are repeatedly exposed to quantitative data showing the benefits of coming to class (Moore, in press b).

3. If, after their first semester, students have earned GPAs lower than 2.5, they should be required to meet with their advisor to discuss their academic futures. These meetings should include a blunt discussion of the fact that most developmental education students who earn low grades during their first semester of college also earn poor grades during their second semester and are kicked out of school. Advisors and instructors should try to convince students that the students will probably not be an exception to this reality. If these at-risk students want to remain in college and enjoy the choices and economic rewards of being a college graduate, they must change their academic behaviors. This often means that they must attend more classes and be more engaged with their educations. As Thomas and Higbee have noted, “The best . . . teacher, no matter how intellectually stimulating, no matter how clear in providing explanations and examples, may not be able to reach the high risk freshman who has no real interest in learning . . . and will certainly not be successful with the student who fails to show up for class” (p. 231).

4. Eliminate or greatly reduce the use of AAR-type scores as an admissions criterion for developmental education programs. These scores, like the tests used in many states to measure high school students’ academic skills, are poor predictors of college readiness and academic success (Cavanagh, 2003a; Hebel, 2003). AAR scores are also poor predictors of developmental education students’ rates of class attendance, which are a reliable indicator of academic success (Table 2; Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003, in press a, in press b; Romer, 1993; White, 1992; Wiley, 1992). Replace AAR scores with measures of students’ motivation and academic autonomy (Higbee & Thomas, 1999), which often accurately predict students’ academic success.

5. Advisors should use data such as those presented in Figure 1 to try to convince developmental education students that their relatively low AAR scores do not predict the students’ academic success. Many developmental education students believe that their relatively weak performances in high school and on standardized tests ensure that they will have a hard time

meeting the academic rigors of college. Data such as those shown in Figure 1 can be used to help dispel this notion.

6. Tell students that they will have to work hard if they want to succeed. Developmental education students can succeed at all universities, including large, impersonal research universities such as the University of Minnesota. However, students may not know that this success, like most other things of value, has a price: hard work. Perhaps this misconception is understandable; for example: (a) students who entered college in the fall of 2003 spent less time studying in high school than any previous class, yet their grades were higher than those of any previous class; (b) almost half of college freshmen in 2002 had an A average in high school, but only one-third of these students studied more than six hours per week (Marklein, 2003; Sax, Lindholm, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 2002). Moreover, most students in elementary through high school study less than an hour on most nights (Toppo, 2003). Developmental education students should be warned that their success will depend largely on their motivation and willingness to work hard. If students are not motivated enough to work hard, they probably will not succeed.

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Commentary

*CRDEUL*



# *The Learning Skills Professional as a Therapist?*

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*Learning skills professionals are underrated in terms of the skills required to perform their duties. A competent learning skills professional will have knowledge of the latest and most effective skills for college-level learning as well as counseling skills such as active listening, reflection of content, reflection of feelings, minimal encouragement to talk, appropriate following behaviors, and making suggestions when timely. However, many do not realize just how closely the required skills of learning skills professionals parallel established and proven counseling therapies. This article is intended to win the legitimacy, importance, and respect due to those in the learning skills profession.*

**D**avid Deckner-Glick (1998) compared sessions with learning skills professionals to counseling therapy sessions. He claims that there are enough similarities that a session with a competent learning skills professional is a therapy session and that a learning skills professional is equivalent to a true therapist. Of course, there are some obvious differences between a traditional therapist and a learning skills professional. For example, therapists typically treat a broad range of difficulties from anxiety and depression to psychotic disorders. Because these disorders often have a risk of self-harm, therapists are required to obtain specialized training to deal with these at-risk individuals. By contrast, the learning skills professional has a more narrow focus on the learner and the learning

process. In addition, traditional therapists deal with such a range of pathology that many states have required that these individuals be licensed in order to practice their professions. This sort of licensure is not required of the learning skills professional.

How could a session with a learning skills professional resemble a therapy session with a licensed professional? Once a reasonable person compares the activities between the two, the vast differences in purposes and methods must become obvious. “Hrumph!” some will say. To be fair, let us examine the activities of therapists and learning skills professionals as follows and see if Deckner-Glick’s claims might be true. The work of several noted psychologists can shed

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some light on commonly applied therapies and component activities.

Wolpe (1973) defines Behavior Therapy as a form of treatment that tries to change someone's particular unwanted behavior rather than treating the causes. A learning skills professional certainly tries to change a student's unproductive, therefore unwanted, behaviors rather than focus mainly on past causes of unwanted behavior. For example, a learning skills professional does not spend much time on how a student developed inefficient notetaking behaviors, but instead works with a student to refine and acquire more productive and effective notetaking skills in the present.

According to Beck (1990), Cognitive Therapy is a form of treatment used to change someone's habitual patterns of thinking when these thoughts are damaging that person. Certainly learning skills professionals are concerned with behavior damaging to students academically, and providing some form of treatment for the damaging academic behaviors is within the realm of what learning skills professionals do. For example, if during a session the learning skills professional hears a student verbalize, "I just can't do math; it is too hard," the session will likely focus on modifying the limiting effect of these cognitive patterns toward ones that permit acquisition of skills that enhance learning of mathematics.

Each counseling therapy has its own style and characteristics designed to help clients recover in one way or another. How do the characteristics of each one of these common therapies compare to the activities of learning skills professionals? It appears that the characteristics of what a learning skills professional does parallel what cognitive and behavioral therapists do in the course of common practice. Therefore, it appears that Deckner-Glick's perception is accurate.

Taking the learning skills professional's role as a therapist a little further, therapies that work for treating phobias may be useful in treating students' fears related to academics. The definition of a phobia is a persistent, abnormal, and irrational fear of a specific thing or situation that compels one to avoid it, despite the awareness and reassurance that it is not dangerous; a strong fear, dislike, or aversion (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). To help learning skills professionals understand how debilitating some fears related to learning can be, the chart below compares

manifestations of phobias and how they may exhibit themselves in students who face the challenges in college-level learning.

As shown in Figure 2, many symptoms observed in learning skills sessions can be very similar to characteristics of phobias. Therefore, intervention for students, whether called therapies, advice, strategies, or guidance, may provide benefits if these interventions mimic what a therapist does when treating phobias. Also, treatment of academic-related phobias and near phobias may benefit from the activities of the learning skills therapist when proper counseling techniques are used. However, when the symptoms of phobias are suspected, learning skills professionals are well advised to consult with a campus psychologist or psychotherapist and refer the student as appropriate.

Some of the treatments for phobias are listed below along with ways to utilize them to help students overcome academic-related fears. Behavioral therapy methods have proven successful for the treatment of phobias, especially the simple phobias like social phobias. One method is called systematic desensitization (Lazarus, 1989; Wolpe, 1984). It involves gradually confronting a person with situations that are closer and closer to the feared ones. Another method used by behavioral therapists is called exposure therapy (Licky & Gordon, 1991). With this method, fearful people are repeatedly exposed to the feared situation or object so that they can see that no harm befalls them. Eventually, the fear will begin to fade (Johnson, 1997).

Learning skills professionals can use a form of systematic desensitization when they meet with students with fears about academic related tasks. For example, if there is a student with fears about meeting with faculty members, they may set up a plan for confronting the fears in increments. In conjunction with a cooperative faculty member, increment number one could be saying "hi" to that faculty member. Increment number two could be asking that faculty member a question after class, even if the fearful student knows the answer. A third increment may be to schedule an appointment with that faculty member with two or three questions written on a notecard. Larger or smaller increments may be designed to go at a pace tolerable to each student. The benefits come as each increment is completed and the student sees that there are no external consequences that need to be feared.

Figure 1. Comparison of Therapies to Activities of Learning Skills Professionals.

| THERAPY IN GENERAL   | COGNITIVE THERAPY | BEHAVIORAL THERAPY | LEARNING SKILLS PROFESSIONAL   |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| Short term structure   | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—there is no long-term “therapy” in learning skills except possibly with students with learning disabilities  |
| Utilizes collaboration between client and therapist  | Yes               | Yes                | Yes  |
| Helps client understand inaccuracies in thinking and behavior  | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—helps students identify dysfunctional cognitive processes, behavior patterns, and skills used for learning   |
| Helps client replace dysfunctional thinking and behaviors  | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—helps students acquire more functional cognitive and behavior patterns and skills for learning   |
| Focuses mostly on outward symptoms   | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—observes symptoms of dysfunctional cognitive and behavior patterns and skills in learning  |
| Focus is more on here and now and less on the past   | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—targets dysfunctional cognitive and behavior patterns for learning that are affecting performance in the here and now  |
| Concrete in nature (what can be done to fix it)  | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—focus is on cognitive patterns, attitudes, skills, and competencies to replace dysfunctional ones  |
| Goal is self-sufficiency, independent of the therapist   | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—the goal is helping students become self-sufficient and independent of academic support services   |
| Encourages metacognition—the ability to promote wellness by controlling and directing the thinking processes that affect feelings and behavior | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—the goal is to help students identify thinking patterns that affect feelings and behaviors, which in turn, affect learning and academic performance                |
| Based on the premise that escaping from or avoiding dysfunctional thinking and behaviors is reinforcing  | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—only through identifying the dysfunctional thinking and learning behaviors and replacing them can there be improvement and recovery from poor academic performance |
| Encourages clients to develop and practice more functional behaviors   | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—regular meetings are encouraged for feedback on results of attempts to develop functional behaviors and for additional guidance                                    |
| Success depends on the clients   | Yes               | Yes                | Yes—students must make the changes necessary to succeed academically. Learning skills professionals do not do the work for the students                                |

Repeated exposures to fearful situations can also be utilized by learning skills professionals. An example for test anxiety may be to give students a short test in the learning skills professional's office or in the learning support center after showing them a good way to learn the material. The test may consist only of one or two simple content questions over material on which the student was supposed to make notes and study them. In time, that could be increased to 5 to 10 questions. It is important to keep in mind that it is normal for students to feel anxiety going into a test if they are not confident that they know the material. For example, rereading text or rereading highlighted material puts students in an "out-of-control" situation in which they do not discover what has and has not been learned until they get a test grade back. At this point students may believe that they have no control over their test performance. Placing main ideas on one side of a notecard, recording related details on the other, and then quizzing oneself over these cards, can put students into a situation where they see what has and has not yet been learned before they take a test, when they can still do something about it (Annis, 1983, Congos, 1988). Feeling in control reduces fear and anxiety. When trying either of these approaches for academic-related fears, it is a good idea to do so in consultation with someone from the campus counseling center.

Because what we do as learning skills professionals so closely parallels what therapists do, models used by

therapists may be adapted and applied to students with learning skills deficiencies. Knowing more about phobias and their treatments can provide a few more useful tools in the learning skills professional's kit for helping students acquire and refine the cognitive and applied skills for learning to succeed in college.

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Figure 2. Specific Phobias Related To Learning Skills.

| PHOBIA CHARACTERISTICS  | MANIFEST IN LEARNING  |
|---|---|
| Marked or persistent fear that is unreasonable and is cued by a specific object or situation. | Fears may manifest themselves in terms of math anxiety, test anxiety, fear about in-class participation, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of meeting with professors, etc.  |
| Exposure to the stimulus almost invariably provokes an immediate anxiety response.            | This is true with many learning-related tasks such as exposure to impending exams and quizzes, textbook assignments, taking notes, contributing in class, participating in group projects, participating in study groups, performing lab work, etc. |
| The person recognizes that the fear is unreasonable.  | Many students realize that the anxiety is unreasonable enough to have a disabling effect academically such as inhibiting understanding, learning, remembering, performing on exams, and earning desired grades.                                     |
| The phobic situation is avoided or else endured with anxiety or distress.                     | When not involved in avoiding or enduring, anxiety and distress are by-products. These by-products may even become uncomfortable enough to function as a motivator to seek help from learning skills professionals or counselors.                   |
| The avoidance of distress interferes significantly with occupational or academic functioning. | Avoidance of distress related to academics often leads to behaviors that result in poor learning and low grades.  |

(Phobia characteristics are from the Diagnosis and Statistical Manual [DSM]-IV, 1994)



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# *On a Personal Note: A Response to Congos and Burgan*

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*This note responds to some of the issues discussed in “The Learning Skills Professional as a Therapist?” by Dennis Congos and Michael Burgan and represents the views of the author only. Specifically, I discuss the distinction between the work of the professional licensed counselor and the learning assistance professional and the use of terminology that reflects a medical model for learning assistance.*

I began my career as a developmental educator in 1974, serving as a graduate assistant coordinating learning skills programs within the counseling center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. At that time learning support centers were just beginning to evolve as separate entities. My duties involved training graduate students and residence hall staff members to conduct individual and group counseling sessions related to enhancing reading skills, developing study strategies, and reducing test anxiety. In addition, I presented workshops and provided direct service to students. Upon completing my graduate work, I became the director of the Office of Counseling and Career Services at Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College), where I performed many of the same functions in addition to other duties. Later I served for 14 years as a faculty member within the counseling component of the Division of Developmental Studies, which was later to become

Academic Assistance (ACA; Dwinell, Higbee, & Antenen, 1994; Higbee & Dwinell, 1998), and is now known as the Division of Academic Enhancement at the University of Georgia (UGA).

Thus, as I read Congos’ and Burgan’s commentary, “The Learning Skills Professional as a Therapist?” many of their ideas resonated with me. I appreciated their documentation of the comparison between therapeutic strategies and activities performed by learning assistance professionals. For three decades I have served as an advocate for the role of counselors in the work of developmental education and learning assistance (Dwinell & Higbee, 1990, 1991; Higbee, 1980, 1988, 1989; Higbee & Dwinell, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1993, 1995; Higbee, Dwinell, & Thomas, 2002; Higbee & Thomas, 1999). I agree that there is considerable room for overlap in the work done by learning assistance professionals and counselors working in the field of

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college student development. Indeed, during my tenure at UGA the counseling center discontinued its role in providing study skills counseling. This function became part of the mission of the Division of Academic Assistance, which when changing its name from Developmental Studies had also shifted from the service of a target group of students considered underprepared at the time of admission to a unit that served all students at the university (Dwinell, Higbee, & Antenen, 1994; Higbee & Dwinell, 1998; Higbee, Thomas, Hayes, Glauser, & Hynd, 1998). The staff members engaged in providing this counseling within ACA through courses (Higbee, Dwinell, & Thomas), workshops, and individual and group sessions, as well as consultations in the newly established learning center, were trained counselors or graduate students from related programs.

As a result of my experience in the field, I differ with Congos and Burgan on two points. The purpose of this response is to articulate my personal viewpoint, which, like Congos' and Burgan's commentary, is not meant to represent the views of the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, but my own.

First, although I believe that listening techniques and other counseling strategies should be part of the training provided for learning assistance professionals, I would not refer to them as "therapists." I think that it is critical to distinguish between appropriate activities to be performed in college and university learning support centers, depending upon the training of the staff, and the provision of therapy by licensed professionals. One of the most important aspects of training for learning assistance professionals must be when, how, and to whom to make referrals. For example, systematic desensitization (Wolpe, 1984) involves more than exposing students to a hierarchy of anxiety-provoking scenarios (Higbee, 1980). A trained therapist would also teach students progressive muscle relaxation, cognitive restructuring, and other methods for coping with the physical and emotional symptoms of stress.

Second, I believe that it is imperative that developmental education and learning assistance professionals avoid representing their work from the perspective of a medical model. The use of terms like "abnormal," "symptoms," "deficiencies," "phobias," and "treatment" create the impression that students

who receive learning assistance are not "normal" or "well." Thus, the medical-model approach contributes to the sense of stigma (Pedelty, 2001) that dissuades some students who could benefit from learning support programs to seek assistance.

I agree with Congos and Burgan that the work of learning assistance professionals is often undervalued. Furthermore, many learning assistance professionals are as highly educated in their chosen disciplines as therapists are in theirs. In fact, in my early years at the University of Wisconsin I realized that I had no business teaching reading strategies, that my approach was superficial because I lacked the knowledge and training to do this work effectively. Learning assistance professionals certainly merit "legitimacy, importance, and respect" (Congos & Burgan). But learning assistance professionals deserve this high regard for the work they do, for the role they play in promoting student development and enhancing academic achievement and retention, not because of any similarities between their activities and those of trained therapists.

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## *Response to Higbee*

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### Counter-point from Dennis Congos

The term “therapist” has many uses and meanings beyond medical models. With only a cursory scanning of internet dictionaries, we found play therapy, group therapy, occupational therapy, and recreational therapy. Definitions of the term “therapy” range from treating mental and physical illnesses to actions that help someone feel better, grow stronger, relieve tension, and be taken care of as by remedial training. It is even the name of a rock bank in Ireland. The term “therapist” seems to have evolved connotations and denotations with value and utility beyond the traditional medical application. Instead of trudging along with the old, time-worn, customary usage of the term, we asked why not use the term for learning skills specialists since what they do so closely parallels what traditional therapists do. To use a cliché: if it quacks like a duck, walks like a duck . . . etc.

Our aim is to bring more legitimacy to what hard working learning skills professionals do and enlighten those in the profession whose views are reminiscent of the story of the king’s clothes where everyone is telling the king what he wants to hear so often that he believes

it as he walks naked down the street. We dare to speak what has become obvious. It was inevitable that it would stir controversy between the old and the new. Is that a bad thing?

### Counter-point from Dr. Michael Burgan

First of all, the term therapist is ubiquitous in nature. There are physical therapists, occupational therapists, etc., and using it in relation to learning skills professionals (LSP) is not a violation of any licensure law that I am aware of (I’ve worked in six states). It’s not as if we were comparing LSPs to psychologists or licensed clinical social workers.

The techniques that we referred to in the article, such as systematic desensitization, are not exclusively reserved for any “therapist” group but are used successively by teachers, administrators, nurses, medical doctors, and others. Why shouldn’t LSPs be able to use these approaches as well? The question of knowing “when, how, and to whom to make referrals” does not properly relate to our article. We were referring to what

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LSPs do now and the recognition that they deserve for the breadth and depth of skills they bring to the profession. Of course referrals should be made when appropriate, but LSPs should not rush to refer someone, with whom they have established rapport, if they themselves have the requisite skills and training to intervene successfully. As mentioned before, the terms “abnormal, symptoms, deficiencies,” etc., are just terms from medicine and the medical model. They are simply accurate depictions of behavior that communicate clearly to fellow professionals.

Dr. Higbee’s response to our article supports the elitist, proprietary beliefs that one cannot appropriately utilize psychological techniques unless they possess a narrow range of training and licensure. This sort of thinking will only serve to reduce the benefits of a wide range of psychological interventions to students who choose to see LSPs and other campus professionals who are appropriately trained to provide these interventions.





Appendices

*CRDEUL*



# *Bibliography of Resources for Multicultural Higher Education*

Compiled by Kwabena Siaka, Jeanne L. Higbee, Karen L. Miksch, Dana Britt Lundell, Fang Jiang, Patrick L. Bruch, and Rashné Jehangir

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The Center for Research on  
Developmental Education and Urban Literacy

## Publication Announcements



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# Call for Submissions: CRDEUL Monograph Series Student Standpoints About Access Programs in Higher Education

*The sixth annually published monograph of by The Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy.*

We encourage and invite educators to contribute to the sixth independent monograph in a series sponsored by the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL). The goal of these monographs is to build strong research and theoretical foundations in the fields of developmental education, learning assistance, and access education programs from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, researchers, support services specialists, and students. The sixth monograph will feature theory, research, and best practices that centrally feature student standpoints about access programs in higher education. Priority will be given to manuscripts that address student perspectives from populations traditionally underrepresented and underserved in higher education.

*Articles for this monograph might explore and expand the following questions:*

- What do students themselves have to say about the quality of their experiences in higher education access programs such as learning centers, developmental courses, or Supplemental Instruction? What do they think about these programs? What are the benefits and challenges? This kind of article might involve conducting qualitative research that primarily focuses on students' perspectives using interviews, focus groups, or case studies.
- What is the nature of the transition from high school to college as described by students who are under-served in educational systems? What kinds of access programs or services support their transition effectively? Where do students perceive the programs to be unsupportive?
- What kinds of education or workplace goals do students bring upon entering postsecondary institutions, and how do the access programs in which they participate specifically shape their perspectives, achievements, and outcomes?
- How do students perceive the impact of multicultural issues on their experiences with access programs? This includes race, ethnicity, home language, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and a variety of other factors that intersect within their personal, home, and academic lives.
- What kinds of biases or stereotypes do students hold as they enter higher education and participate in access programs? Is there stigma? What is the nature of this stigma? Are there positive experiences to report? What positive views do they hold?

Process: Submissions (see attached form) must be **postmarked by May 15, 2005**. Manuscripts will be forwarded to the editorial board for peer review. Authors will then be notified regarding the status of their proposals and receive recommendations and feedback by August 15, 2005. Manuscript revisions will be due by November 15, 2005. The publication date for this monograph is spring 2006.

Refer to the attached guidelines for authors for further information related to manuscript submission. This information is also available online at <http://www.gen.umn.edu/research/crdeul/monographs.htm>

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# Guidelines for Authors

## *Student Standpoints About Access Programs in Higher Education*

A publication of the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL), General College, and the University of Minnesota.

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1. Manuscripts and reference style must be in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Submissions that do not comply with APA style will be returned to the author(s).
2. Manuscripts must be typewritten, double-spaced, minimum one-inch margins, regular type face/font, preferably 12 point, no right justification. Do not use boldface type or special fonts. Italics are used instead of underlining for titles and emphasis, including subheadings and in the reference list (see APA handbook, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, pp. 100-103).
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7. The title of the paper should be centered at the top of the third page, double-spaced, and followed by text (see APA manual, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 298). The body of the chapter follows on the third page, and may range in length from 10 to 30 pages, including all references, tables, and figures. Each page should include the running head and page number in the upper right corner, as described in the APA manual (see APA manual, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 288).
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