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ABSTRACT

Prepared for the National Dissemination Project to suggest ways in which community colleges might better serve the needs of minority and disadvantaged students, this report discusses outreach and inreach programs. The three purposes of the paper are to: (1) describe the outreach function of recruiting high-risk minority, and disadvantaged students; (2) assess specific problems that produce attrition among these students; and (3) examine inreach programs designed to alleviate the attrition problem. The paper concludes with recommendations for developing inreach and outreach programs to provide educational opportunity for high-risk students. (DB)

RECRUITING: THE PROBLEM OF ATTRITION

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Washington State University

A report of the
National Dissemination Project
for Post-Secondary Education

June, 1974

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FOREWORD

This report was prepared for the National Dissemination Project to suggest ways in which community colleges might better serve the needs of minority and disadvantaged students through planning.

The National Dissemination Project is an outgrowth of earlier projects funded or sponsored by the Office of Economic Opportunity to develop comprehensive educational services for the disadvantaged, and to provide institutional support in program development. One of its major missions is to provide information and assistance to planners and educators at the community college level, by responding to their requests for specific data and reports.

This report is the result of a national poll conducted by the National Dissemination Project, which identified the topics on which most respondents indicated a need for further information. The response to our poll was sufficiently large to indicate that there are certain "key" concerns felt by community college persons across the U.S. Each of our reports addresses such a national concern; and, it is hoped, provides the kinds of information that will be of help to those requesting it.

We would like to extend our special thanks to Dr. Raymond E. Schultz, and the graduate division of Washington State University, for their assistance in preparing this series of National Dissemination Reports. The work put in by Dr. Schultz's "team" on all these topics represents a distinguished contribution to knowledge on community college concerns.

The National Dissemination Project will continue until August 31, 1974 to provide information and assistance to help individuals, colleges and systems better serve the needs of students, primarily those classified as "non-traditional" and "disadvantaged."

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INTRODUCTION

A major objective of the modern community college is to provide an educational opportunity for the high-risk students of our nation. These students can be described in several different ways. In racial terms, high-risk students are:

> Black people in the rural South and in the Black ghettos of our towns and cities. Mexican-Americans in the rural and urban Southwest and West. Puerto Ricans in a few large Northern cities. American Indians on reservations and in the cities of the Southwest and West. Cuban immigrants.[1]

In socio-economic terms, high-risk students come from the lower socio-economic strata of our society. In educational terms, high-risk students are those who have experienced repeated failure within the elementary and secondary schools. No matter what descriptive terminology one uses, the high-risk, minority, and disadvantaged youth are the new students in our community junior colleges and the community college must provide programs to assure educational opportunity for them.

The two essential components necessary to meet the educational opportunity objective for these new students are outreach programs and inreach programs.[2] Outreach programs are "service and educational programs which extend themselves out into the community."[3] Outreach includes off-campus recruiting programs designed to encourage and facilitate the enrollment of high-risk, disadvantaged and minority students.

Inreach programs are "a special brand of supportive activities and programs aimed at addressing the on-campus needs peculiar to minority students,"[4] high-risk, and disadvantaged students. Financial aid, tutoring, counseling, and other developmental programs are all components of the inreach program.

The outreach function of recruitment of high-risk, minority, and disadvantaged students has become well established within the last decade and has met with some success. However, the inreach function of providing for the special needs of these students after they are enrolled in the community college is inadequate. Consequently, the recruiting of high-risk students without the concommitant inreach programs has failed to provide educational opportunities for these students.

The purpose of this paper is threefold: to describe the outreach function of recruiting high-risk, minority and disadvantaged students; to assess specific problems which produce attrition among these students; and to examine inreach programs designed to alleviate the attrition problem. This paper will conclude with recommendations for developing inreach and outreach programs designed to provide educational opportunity for high-risk students.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Open Door Policy and Recruiting

The philosophical stance of the community junior college has been to offer post-secondary education to all,[5] to provide higher education for the masses,[6] to provide something for everyone at minimum expense,[7] and to help students of all ages find educa-

tional fulfillment.[8] This revolutionary philosophy has been referred to as "popularizing higher education or 'democratization'"[9] of higher education. To implement the philosophic, popularization or democratization ideal of a higher education system which could be all things to all people required "the elimination of barriers based on class, poverty, race, or cultural deprivation."[10]

Two administrative methods of eliminating the barriers of class, poverty, race and cultural deprivation are the open door policy and the active recruitment of minority and disadvantaged students. The open door policy states,

> Any high school graduate, or any person over 18 years of age who seems capable of profiting by the instruction offered, is eligible for admission.[11]

This statement has become the basic outreach policy of many community junior colleges throughout the United States. To implement this policy, community colleges have established extensive recruiting programs to encourage students to take advantage of the available opportunities.[12, 13, 14]

Outreach policies which include the open door philosophy and the active recruitment of minority and disadvantaged students, imply that not only will high-risk students be admitted to the community junior college but also,

> . . . that the student, regardless of his level of achievement, will receive the best education possible in the college commensurate with his needs, efforts, motivation, and abilities.[15]

The philosophical commitment to provide formal education for all people and the active recruitment of minority and disadvantaged students has resulted in the enormously difficult task of educating highly diversified student bodies. Thus, the

community junior college has faced a dilemma:

> It is confronted with maintaining standards to insure the employability of its graduates and the unequivocal guarantee of its credits to other accredited colleges and universities. At the same time, it is committee by philosophy to providing some formal education or training for all students regardless of social class, sex, race, and lack of previous academic success. In either case, the comprehevsive community college has no option. It has to perform both functions.[16]

The outreach function of recruitment programs and the open door policy have been most effective in bringing new students to the community colleges. However, most of these new students are marginal or high-risk students and to serve their educational needs, the community colleges need extensive inreach programs.

The Problem of Attrition

As a result of the active recruitment of disadvantaged students and the open door philosophy,

> A phenomenon of growing importance in community colleges is the enrollment of large numbers of students who are not yet prepared to succeed in academic pursuits.[17]

A danger inherent in the active recruitment of disadvantaged students and the open door policy is that the open door can easily become a revolving door. Fawcett stated the problem succinctly when he wrote,

> What does it profit an individual if the school is near enough to make attendance feasible and open enough to permit him to enter, if, once in, he is not helped in those many non-functional areas where help is necessary to promote his development.[18]

Unless the community college has established special programs to assist high-risk students who lack adequate preparation, these students will be in the open door and out the revolving door in but a brief time span.

When the community colleges of New York changed from competitive admissions requirements to open admissions, their enrollment, especially their enrollment of minority and disadvantaged students, increased substantially.[19] However, the New York system also discovered that while their traditional freshman dropout rate remained approximately the same as in previous years, the open admissions and disadvantaged students' dropout rate was significantly and discouragingly higher. After open admissions in New York:

> The community college had a drop out rate of 40.1 per cent among open-admissions freshmen as opposed to 34.4 per cent among traditional freshmen.
>
> These figures are discouraging enough, but they become much more upsetting when we realize that most branches of CUNY have adopted a policy of not flunking students out during their first year.[20]

Kaplan has stated that the high dropout rate in New York revealed the schools' "failure to deal with the educational needs of any but fairly well-prepared students from at least average and often well above average schools."[21]

A recent nation-side survey of 671 community colleges conducted by Goodrich and associates[22] substantiated the problem of attrition of open admissions and disadvantaged students. In this study, Goodrich found a first year attrition rate of fifty-five per cent for all students and a fifty-eight per cent rate for minorities. Thus it is evident that the high attrition rate of community college minority students is a nation-side problem.

Throughout the past decade, the community colleges have actively recruited and encouraged the enrollment of high-risk students but it would appear that:

> . . . the greatest challenge facing the two-year college in the 1970's is that of making good on its promise to provide a meaningful education for all.[23]

The evidence indicates that the open door policy and recruitment programs are increasing the enrollment of disadvantaged and minority students; but the high attrition rate indicates that the community college program lacks the expertise and commitment necessary to maintain these enrollments.

INREACH PROGRAMS

Examples of Inreach Studies Designed to Assess the Causes of Attrition

Several studies have been conducted to identify causes of the high attrition rate of high-risk students. Hall studied 150 lower socio-economic freshmen in the California Community College system to ascertain if there was a difference between socio-economic status and achievement.[24] He found that middle socio-economic status students experienced greater academic success in their first semester of community college work than did lower socio-economic status students. Additionally, and more importantly, Hall found that there was no difference between the two groups on desire to achieve, both groups wanted to be successful in their community college education. Thus, the evidence in this study indicated that the difference was in performance not aspiration level.[25]

DeVecchio[26] studied 439 full time students at Lake Land College in Illinois to ascertain if there were personality variables that could distinguish potential dropouts from nondropouts. He was unable to identify any personality variables that could distinguish between the two groups.[27] DeVecchio found no personality

variables that could distinguish between high-risk students and all other students.

Many community colleges have focused on lack of academic preparation as a cause of the high attrition rate and consequently have focused on remediation as the solution. Hamilton and Heinkel[28] studied an English remedial program at San Diego City College. These authors found that those students who had had programmed instruction in English scored significantly higher on final exams than those who had had regular instruction.[29] Similarly, Thelen found at Forest Park Community College, Missouri, that standardized test scores could be raised significantly as the result of a remedial program.[30] However, neither Hamilton and Heinkel nor Thelen could indicate that remediation decreased the attrition rate for high-risk students.

When the City University of New York decided on an open door policy, it also decided to implement an open curriculum. The recommendations of the University Commission stated,

> All students should be guaranteed the program of their choice except under the most unusual circumstances . . . We do not believe that the present university policy which forces some students to enter programs in which they have no interest can be justified, and we recommend that this policy be immediately discontinued.[31]

Additionally, a strong counseling program, remedial services, and time extensions for completing programs were recommended. Unfortunately, there was no available follow-up to ascertain whether allowing students to enter a curriculum of their interest was successful in reducing the attrition rate.

A research project on student attrition was also conducted by NORCAL,[32] a cooperative project consisting of community colleges

in northern California. In this study, the investigatory team found data that low ability and/or low motivation were the control elements in the prediction of attrition.[33] The data indicates that the reduction of the attrition rate can only be effected by the establishment of programs of skill development that are highly motivating.

The studies presented in this section represent examples of research designed to assess the causes of high-risk student attrition. Unfortunately, the lack of research programs and evidence make it impossible to isolate the specific causes of attrition.

Examples of Inreach Programs Designed to Decrease the Attrition Rate

Recently, researchers have begun to monitor the programs that were designed to assist high-risk students. The purpose of these research projects has been to determine if the attrition rate is actually being reduced as a result of the program.

San Diego Community College designed a one-semester, General Studies Program[34] to develop academic skills necessary to participate successfully in the regular college program and thereby reduce the attrition rate. The program was evaluated by researchers

> . . . to determine if completion of General Studies courses caused students to persist longer in college, withdraw from fewer courses while in college, and earn higher grade point averages in all course work attempted.[35]

The study results indicated that completion of the General Studies Program was related to a greater college persistance rate for the second semester, however, there was no difference in the third and fourth semesters' persistance. Further, there was no significant difference in the grade point averages of students who had been

enrolled and students who had not been enrolled in the General Studies Program. In summary, the San Diego Community College General Studies Program did work successfully to decrease the attrition rate for one semester immediately following enrollment in the program but it was unsuccessful in maintaining a decreased attrition rate.

Roueche and Kirk[36] studied remedial programs for high-risk students in five Texas Community Colleges. The results indicated that

> . . . students in remedial programs earned significantly higher grades than did high-risk students in nonremedial programs.[37]
>
> Academic performance of students in remedial programs dropped significantly after they entered regular college programs.[38]
>
> Students in remedial programs persisted in college to a greater extent than did high-risk students in nonremedial programs.[39]

These results support Heinkel's findings at San Diego Community College[40] that remedial programs do have some influence on decreasing the attrition rate of high-risk students.

Macomb County Community College, Michigan,[41] designed a program to decrease not only the total dropout rate of the high risk student but also the half dropout rate. (A half dropout student is defined as one who enrolls in a full academic program at the beginning of the semester but drops classes and completes the semester with a reduced academic program.) To decrease the dropout and half dropout rate, Macomb County Community College created a one-year, college level, general studies program which was organized in class blocks with five classes per block. The

twenty students in each block attended all classes together. The rationale for scheduling block classes was:

> Being part of a small cohesive group of students made it harder for an individual student to just leave one or two courses . . .[42]

Chalgrin conducted a two year study of the general studies students and the liberal arts control group. In the first year, two-thirds of the general studies students had earned between twenty-five and thirty-five credits while only one-fourth of the comparison group earned that many credits.[43] During the second year, the former general studies students were enrolled in the regular liberal arts college. At the end of the second year, one-fourth of the original general studies students had earned fifty-five or more credits while only one-tenth of the control group had earned that number.[44] Further, the graduation ratio of general studies students to the control group was three to one.

Tarrant County Community College District, Texas,[45] developed a one year general education program which was organized on the block system similar to the Macomb County Community College program. The evaluation of the Tarrant County program indicated that the overall holding power was good.[46]

Foothill Junior College, California,[47] also conducted a block program for remedial students and found no significant difference between the block students and the control group who were enrolled in the traditional program. This lack of success was attributed to the lack of diagnosis of specific learning problems for each remedial student.

The third phase of the NORCAL project[48] was begun in 1970. In this phase, each of the eleven participating community colleges

was to implement a program designed to assist high risk students and to reduce attrition. The results of this program were that:

> . . . less than half the proportion of specially treated students withdrew, as compared to the control group. . . . Further, a 30% greater proportion of experimental students re-enrolled for the second semester.[49]

In analyzing the programs of each of the eleven community colleges, the authors found that some schools had standard remedial programs, others had block curriculum, and some had begun tutorial programs. However, "the value of counseling services to the potential dropout was clearly the most consistent experimental finding in the study."[50] As a result of the findings, the authors stated that,

> Not only is it clear that the provision of special services and attention to the high risk student can cut the attrition rate in half, it is also clear that the capability of providing these services already exists in every community college.[51]

While the gains in holding power indicated by these programs is encouraging, most community colleges have establish little or nothing in the way of programs to decrease attrition. A study of 681 community colleges conducted by Goodrich and associates[52] found that nearly 300 schools had no stated minority-focused programs. Further, only 150 colleges reported course offerings in remedial language and mathematical skills.[53] While one-third of the reporting community colleges had some programs designed to meet the needs of minorities only twelve institutions reported substantial programs; i.e., Black Cultural Center or Office of Minority Student Affairs, peer group tutoring, part-time employment, counseling by minority faculty and staff, social-cultural functions, outreach programs, adult education, pre-college assistance, health care, and short-term job training.[54]

The studies summarized in this section have indicated that the problem of the high attrition rate for high-risk students is extant throughout the nation. These studies also indicated that only a few community colleges have established programs to reduce the high attrition rate.

> In the past, colleges became used to dealing with students who had had at least an adequate high school background and at least partially developed academic skills. As a result they were able to focus on teaching content and play down or even ignore the problem of skill development. But open admissions has brought with it an entirely new set of problems relating to skill development.[55]

The programs which have been developed have resulted in some degree of success. To truly provide educational opportunity, all community colleges need programs to assist the high-risk students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The outreach functions of the open door policy and recruitment of high-risk students have been successful in bringing new students into the community colleges. However, because many high-risk students are inadequately prepared for college-level, academic work, they have met with failure in the community college, failure which has caused them to drop out and contributes to the high attrition rate of the community college students. To reduce the high attrition rate among disadvantaged students, some community colleges have developed inreach programs. These inreach programs have included block classes, extensive counseling services, tutoring, and many other skill development programs. For these inreach programs to be successful in reducing the attrition rate, they have had to provide for the individual needs and deficiencies of the high-risk student.

The purpose of this section is to present ideas and concepts which, according to the literature, would improve the probability of success of a program for high-risk students. These recommendations speak to the problems of educating the high-risk student and suggest ideas for resolving those problems.

Instructor Assignment

Teaching nontraditional students requires greater enthusiasm and commitment than teaching traditional students. Roueche contends that, "only instructors who volunteer to teach nontraditional students should ever be involved in developmental programs."[56] Any teacher unsure of his commitment to a nontraditional program will decrease the probability of the program's success.[57] Certainly, any teacher assigned to a nontraditional program against his will will increase the probability of the program's failure.

Further, research indicates that in any semester, no teacher should teach more than two nontraditional classes, more than twelve hours, and more than twenty nontraditional students per class.[58] The rationale for these recommendations is based on the evidence that nontraditional students require more individual assistance in teacher contact time. Moreover, more teacher time is required for the development of individualized, instructional materials.

Finally, no inexperienced teachers, unless specifically trained to teach nontraditional students, should be assigned to a special program.

Administrative Organization

To create an adequate program for high-risk students will require "a separately organized division of developmental studies

. . . with its own staff and administrative head."[59] This department would be charged with inservice training for teachers, development of individualized class materials, and experimentation with a variety of instructional mediums. Existing departments have neither the time nor the expertise to develop these types of programs, programs which will require concentrated time, effort, and divergent problem solving techniques.

Curriculum Individualization

To individualize instruction for the high-risk student requires that the community college diagnose the students' learning difficulties, prescribe and develop means of correcting those difficulties, and evaluate the outcomes.

To diagnose student entry behaviors, placement tests need to be developed. Standardized tests now used by most community colleges are inadequate because they lack diversity and fail to measure skills related to course objectives. Consequently, placement tests need to be developed which would assess the skills necessary to master the objectives of courses.[60] Further, to adequately assess the entry behaviors of students, diverse measures are needed. Authorities such as Losak[61] argue that the community college must diagnose the needs of high-risk students before it can prescribe remediation and evaluate progress.

When prescribing and developing individualized programs to correct learning difficulties, community colleges should be particularly cognizant of the principle that "curriculum offerings in developmental programs should be relevant."[62] Basic general education courses should be taught from

> . . . a broad, cultural viewpoint. Instead, most are taught with the idea -- either latent or expressed -- that they are the first courses for those planning to major in the area.[63]

To achieve relevancy, the curricula must start with the student's entry behaviors and expand only as the learner's abilities improve. Effective curriculum development will allow a learner to begin a program with his entry abilities and proceed from that level to more sophisticated processes only as the student's skill level increases.

Each student's course of instruction should be formulated by instructor and student together so that the program can achieve the goals of the subject matter field and the goals of the individual student.

"Instruction should accommodate individual differences and permit students to learn and proceed at their own paces."[64] This Mastery Learning[65] approach to instruction should include specific behavioral objectives.[66] Further, self-pacing is necessary to allow students to start where they are and progress at their own speed. This recommendation connotes an accountability model for developmental curriculum. Crucial questions for an accountability model are:

> What can we expect our students to be able to do after completing a given course at the college?
>
> What programs are being developed to make instructors more effective in causing students to learn?
>
> Have appropriate learning activities been provided for all students?[67]

Finally, the community college must develop means of evaluating both their total program and the performance of indivi-

dual students within the program. Program evaluation will document curricular strengths and weaknesses and provide direction for improving programs. Individual appraisal will assess whether a student needs to be recycled or whether he has met the prescribed objectives and should be given credit, grades and new, more advanced learning experiences.

Course Credit and Grading

High-risk students need to be provided with alternative credit and grading systems. Researchers suggest that "all developmental courses should carry credit for graduation or program certification."[68]

> One reaction on the part of students which has occurred frequently enough for us to be especially sensitive in this area, is the rejection of remediation. It seems reasonable to many with whom we have worked that academic weakness can be overcome by a generous application of remediation. It may, in fact, be the case that if students would accept remediation as worth the effort, they would benefit by it. However, the stigma attached to the notion of remediation programs and the failure of some programs to hold the students and deliver the promised results, place remedial efforts at great disadvantage on many campuses.[69]

While all remedial courses should carry credit, the credit should be based on the amount and quality of work as outlined in the behavioral objectives of the course rather than time spent -- the criteria used now for most credit allotments.[70]

Since high-risk students' experiences with schools have been negative, researchers suggest that "grading policies and practices should be non-punitive."[71] Grades should be related to achievement, not time. To follow a diagnostic, prescriptive, evaluative instructional model will require that each student be allowed to move at his own pace. When the goal is reached, credit

and grades are assigned. If the goal is not reached, neither grades nor credit are assigned. There should be no failing grades and no incompletes; the system is left open until the objectives are met.

Student Personnel

Most community college counseling programs have concerned themselves with the vocational and academic concerns of students. However, studies conducted at Miami-Dade Community College[72] have found a high rate of psychological disturbance among high-risk students. Thus, a counseling and developmental program should be concerned not only with the academic and vocational development but also the self concept and emotional health of the high-risk student.

Financial aid, work study, and job placement are needed as an integral part of a nontraditional student personnel program for high-risk students.

> The naivete of the assumption that tuition-free colleges cost nothing to attend was not fully recognized until the colleges began to seek solutions to the problems inherent in increasing minority group representation on campuses.[73]

Students need the confidence that their personal financial needs are adequately provided for so that they can expend their energies on learning.

Transitional Programs

Roueche stated that "efforts should be made to alleviate the abrupt transition from developmental studies to traditional college curricula."[74] One alternative for alleviating the abruptness of the transition from developmental to traditional programs

would be to allow students to go from full-time enrollment in a developmental program, to a phase where they would spend one-half time in the developmental program and one half-time in the regular community college program, and finally full-time enrollment in the regular curriculum. Another alternative would be for the developmental program to continue to provide tutorial assistance for students after they have entered the regular program. Further, the students' advisors and counselors should continue their contact with the students throughout both programs. Most crucially, the developmental studies should be very cognizant of the traditional college curricula so they are preparing students to participate in the regular college program. To assist the student in making the transition from one program to another will require that personnel in the two programs work closely together for the benefit of the student.

CONCLUSION

If the community college is to meet the commitment made to students via the open door policy and recruitment of high-risk students, it must prepare itself to diagnose the needs of students, prescribe remediation for those needs, evaluate student progress, and, if necessary, recycle students to overcome learning disabilities.

> We have the institutions, the open door, the students and the program. It would seem that top priority must now be given at the institutional, state and national level to development of new techniques and procedures to enable us not only to know the student but to build programs in terms of expressed needs and objectives.[75]

Until a community college develops inreach programs which are flexible enough to meet the educational needs of the high-risk students, the outreach programs of the open door policy and recruitment of disadvantaged students are a misrepresentation of an implied promise.

> A college should not even consider student recruitment unless it has an effective educational program available.[76]

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