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ABSTRACT
                This study attempts to determine the characteristics of
effective intervention programs for students on probation in California
community colleges. The author constructed a semi-structured interview tool
based on findings from a literature review. She studied six community
colleges and five four-year universities. The universities were included in
the study because probation intervention programs were conceived at
universities as a result of their need to insure financial solvency.
Four-year colleges frequently require a college orientation course, to be
taken during the first semester. Community colleges cannot mandate such a
class, but many strongly recommend it. The most common components of
intervention utilized in the colleges in the study are: (1) counseling, used
by nine schools; (2) letters mailed, used by seven schools; (3) contracts
drawn, used by six schools; (4) course required, used by three colleges; and
(5) mandatory consequences such as counseling, used by three schools. The
author cites the Scholastic Enhancement Program at Miami University, which
had a first-year persistence rate of 95% for class one, 87% for class two,
and 95% for class three. The author also notes the inherent difficulties in
such a program, such as student stigmatization due to special admissions
labels. Contains 42 references, 24 tables, nine figures, and four appendices.
(NB)

A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE

INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS ON PROBATION

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of

the Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Pepperdine University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Organizational Leadership

by

Dawn Lindsay

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This dissertation, written by

Dawn Sharon Lindsay

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been

submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I would like to thank my parents, James and Marian Sweeney, for providing a foundation that stressed the need for education. For my son, Gregory, I hope I have exemplified my belief that learning is a lifelong process. He has watched and waited patiently as I endeavored on this path, often putting his own desires aside to support mine. For my husband Michael, please know I realize I never could have done this without you. Your support, assistance, encouragement and patience have made my dream a reality. For that I am forever grateful.

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When I made the decision to do a qualitative study, I never realized the number of people who ultimately would have an impact on this dissertation. First, I would like to thank the Chair of my committee, Dr. Farzin Madjidi, for his ongoing support and encouragement. Through his wisdom, kind words and sense of humor, he made this an enjoyable process. Second, I would like to acknowledge the other members of my committee: Dr. Ruth Johnson and Dr. Gerald Rudmann. Their expertise ensured the research conducted was comprehensive and thorough.

The development of my interview questions would not have occurred without the help of my Panel of Experts: David Baird, Arthur Briones, Rendell Drew, Irene Malmgren and Raul Rodriguez. Their combined expertise resulted in an interview questionnaire that facilitated the collection of my research.

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Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify various academic intervention methods used on college campuses in order to determine effective intervention characteristics and propose a compendium of best practices. A semi-structured interview process was utilized to collect information from 11colleges identified through a review of the literature. The research question that guided this study was: What are the characteristics of an intervention program that will help California community colleges initiate probation intervention programs and positively impact student persistence?

This study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, through an in-depth review of the literature completed in chapter one, colleges and universities that had successful intervention programs were identified. In the second phase of the study, principle administrators responsible for the operation of these programs were identified to determine key characteristics of their respective programs. In the final phase, key characteristics identified in the second phase were blended into a compendium of best practices.

The results of this study indicate that colleges with successful programs have institutionalized the program and integrated the costs of the program into their general budget. Students experiencing academic difficulty are contacted, either within or after their first semester, facilitating early intervention and referral. Participation in the program is mandatory, and services are delivered by counselors or instructors who are sensitive to the external factors which impact student success. Students are given individual attention and are monitored until they attain good academic standing. In order

to encourage compliance, colleges use behavioral contracts that provide written reinforcement to their recommendations for success. Students who fail to comply may meet with consequences such as unit-limit holds, registration holds or disqualification from college attendance. There was consensus that the faculty and staff responsible for administration must have a genuine interest in the student, asserting that selection of caring faculty is a critical consideration. There was consensus among those interviewed that effective intervention programs can be replicated at community colleges.

Chapter One

The Context

Introduction to the Study

The primary purpose of the California Community College system is to serve the diverse needs of the students who enter its doors for educational purposes: "By law the California Community Colleges shall admit any California resident and may admit anyone who is over 18 years of age and who is capable of profiting from the instruction offered" (California Chancellor's Office, n.d.). Unlike competitive 4-year colleges and universities, with rigorous criteria that admit only those students who are most likely to succeed, the community colleges have a policy of open enrollment. To fulfill their purpose, California Community Colleges seek "to offer academic and vocational education at the lower level division for both younger and older students" and "to advance California's economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training and services that contribute to continuous work-force improvement" (Retrieved March 18, 2000, from The California Chancellor's Office, (California Chancellor's Office, n.d.).

Funded with a $3.5 billion budget, the chancellor's office is tasked with several basic goals. The primary goal is to lead and coordinate the state's system of education, this requires coordination of efforts and the ability to insure the vision is shared throughout the 107 community college campuses. Additional goals include the desire to collaborate with other providers, measure student learning effectively, develop performance incentives, expand student access through more effective and alternative

services delivery and design a curriculum that addresses the changing learning styles and needs.

During the fall of 1997, more than 1,445,335 students were enrolled in California community colleges. This system makes up the largest system of higher education in the world; it is a driving force in the state's economy as community colleges are the colleges of choice for the majority of students in California. The open enrollment policy encourages anyone seeking higher education to register for classes and was developed to enable all California residents to pursue an academic degree. (California Chancellor's Office, n.d.)

Essential and important functions of the Colleges include: remedial instruction for those in need of it and in conjunction with school districts, instruction in English as a second language, adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level (California Chancellor's Office, n.d.).

The one categorically funded program designated to address the needs of students, and to delineate clearly the responsibilities of the college and the student is matriculation. The Matriculation Resource Manual (1998) states that the primary purpose of matriculation is to create a:

...process that brings a college and a student who enrolls for credit into an agreement for the purpose of realizing the student's educational objectives. The agreement involves responsibilities of both parties to attain those objectives through the college's established programs, policies and requirements. (p. 2)

Matriculation mandates include eight distinct components designed to ensure academic success.

The process begins at the time of application when criteria are applied to determine if the student needs to participate in assessment and counseling. Students, who are required to matriculate, complete an assessment of basic skills in order to evaluate proficiency in English, reading and math. Upon completion of assessment, students meet with a counselor to discuss appropriate course selection and are informed about campus support services should academic difficulties become evident. The main purpose of the matriculation process is to ensure persistence. However, despite efforts to address retention factors, students continue to enter community colleges through a revolving door.

Alan Seidman (1996) has been reviewing various models of retention and offers the following observations. He writes:

The Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) model of retention/attrition has been widely examined, tested and accepted by the educational community since it was first published in 1975 (Halpin, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella, Duby & Iverson, 1983 Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980). Simply stated, the theory posits that individual pre-entry college attributes (family background, skill and ability, prior schooling) form individual goals and commitments. The individual's goals and commitments interact over time with institutional experiences (the formal and informal academic and social systems of the institution). The extent to which the individual becomes academically and socially integrated into the formal and informal academic and social systems of an institution determines the individual's departure decision. (p. 18)

According to Tinto (1993) 54% of the students who enter publicly funded 2-year colleges leave at the conclusion of their first year. In earlier research, Tinto (1987) found that while 61% of students entering 4-year colleges eventually will attain their degrees, only 46% of students entering 2-year colleges will attain their academic goals.

Tinto's research is substantiated by Astin (1975), who indicates that 2-year colleges have the highest dropout rate (59%) of all educational institutions, with students citing boredom, financial problems, personal issues and poor grades as their primary reasons for leaving. That represents more than 430,000 students leaving California community colleges by the end of their first year. With this large attrition number, there are fiscal and educational costs to the state and to the student.

There is a movement to fund community colleges based on student completion rates and student goal attainment. As of fall 2000, many California community colleges are funded based on a student head count that is attained during the third week of the fall and spring semesters. Community college instructors are encouraged to maintain high census numbers until this head count is attained but have no fiscal incentive to maintain students once the census has been reported to the state.

Unlike private universities that are dependent on personal tuition for ongoing funding and program stability, the community college system has been designed to enable students to withdraw, or professors to drop students, after the census has been documented, as that is the point at which funding is determined. While private colleges have been looking for decades at the issues surrounding student persistence, the California Community College system has not had a financial incentive to look at the factors involved in student attrition.

The high drop-out rate poses both financial and ethical dilemmas that community colleges are finding the need to address. While individual community colleges are looking at retention, the State Chancellor's office is wondering how the money provided by the state to each college is being utilized. The State Chancellor's office is aware that quality of service may be an issue and is moving in the direction of accountability. Moreover, new state initiatives are linking funding to measurable goals of student success with the hope of holding colleges more accountable.

Professional Significance

Advocates for student retention programs, which include college success courses and freshman experience seminars, stress that college marketing efforts are placed into the area of recruitment, yet limited resources are placed in the area of retention of students. John Gardner (1998) states that the first 6 weeks of the college experience is the critical time to deal with retention. Although much of Gardener's work is focused on the 4-year college experience, community colleges are beginning to realize the need to retain students. Distance education, telecourses and greater accessibility to other campuses enables potential students to select a campus of choice rather than attending a community college based on proximity to home.

If college involvement is critical to college success, community colleges are facing greater challenges when compared to 4-year dormitory colleges. Issues of student integration onto the campus and the reality that most community college students are commuter students place greater demands on community colleges to develop effective outreach programs that engage the commuter student in campus life.

Based on his experience with the California State College system, Ed Hallberg (1997) initiated his research on college success factors. Hallberg noted the high percentage of students placed on probation who are eventually dismissed. Hallberg asserts that colleges must look at the student from a holistic perspective. His research suggests that factors outside of the control of the campus will impact retention. He stresses the need for strong student support programs that provide the student with financial, emotional and personal assistance at the time of enrollment.

Noel-Levitz Inc. sponsors annual conferences supporting the need to identify problems early and intervene. Students who participate in academic intervention programs are most likely to meet their academic goals. Randi Levitz (1998) believes it is up to the college to provide fiscal support to programs designed to increase retention. Fiscal support facilitates the development of new programs.

Vincent Tinto (1993) asserts, "the key to effective retention lies in strong commitment to quality education and the building of a strong sense of inclusive educational and social community on campus" (p. 4). Tinto encourages colleges to shift the focus from changing the student to changing the culture of the college campus. Changing the cultural climate of the campus includes the development of an academic intervention program that is accessed by faculty, staff and students.

Problem Statement

Although academic intervention is supported by the California State Chancellor's office, there are no policies that mandate what specific types of intervention are appropriate. Similarly, there are no accountability standards against which colleges are measured. The California State Chancellor's office does not offer a compendium of best

practices that would assist individual colleges either in adopting plans for implementation or customizing suggested plans to meet individual campus needs. As a result, few community colleges offer effective intervention services, and more than 400,000 students leave the California community college system at the conclusion of their first year.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to differentiate and evaluate various academic intervention methods used on college campuses in order to identify effective intervention characteristics and propose a compendium of best practices, which will assist community colleges in initiating probation intervention programs that will impact student persistence positively.

Research Question

Accordingly, this study will attempt to answer the following research question: What are the characteristics of an intervention program that will help California community colleges initiate probation intervention programs and impact student persistence positively?

Delimitation

The primary limitations of this study were:

1. The researcher identified the colleges that agreed to participate.

2. Many of the probation intervention programs found are based at 4-year colleges and may not be easy to replicate at a community college.

3. There may be effective programs that were not identified in the research.

4. It is recognized that the characteristics of community college students are different from traditional students attending 4-year universities.

5.   Although previous research has attempted to focus on profiling student characteristics, there are few models that shift the responsibility from identifying and changing the student to identifying and changing the cultural philosophy of the campus.

6.   The researcher is employed in this field. In order to address bias, the researcher utilized a panel of experts for the development of the questionnaire, and two independent professionals for content analysis of the transcripts.

Definitions of Key Terms

Matriculation: A process that brings a college and a student who enrolls for credit into an agreement for the purposes of realizing the student's educational objectives.

Academic Course: A course that leads to degree attainment.

Academic Probation: A student is placed on academic probation if their cumulative grade-point average is below a 2.0 on a 0.0-4.0 scale.

Progress Probation: A student is placed on progress probation if they withdraw from 50% of the courses for which the student initially registered.

Academic Intervention: A program designed to assist students, who face academic difficulties, to meet with academic success.

Disqualification: Because of poor academic performance, the student is asked to leave the campus for a minimum of 1 semester.

Background of the Study

Until 1982, the pervasive belief among academic professionals was that students had the right to fail. In 1982, the California Academic Senate began to study declining

performance throughout the California Community College system. Its conclusions

resulted in a new concept summarized by the belief that students had the right to succeed.

This paradigm shift was caused by concerns that students lacked required entrance skills

and were not properly prepared for academic work. This lack of preparation led to

students dropping, withdrawing or failing classes.

Matriculation departments were instituted throughout California community

colleges in 1986, after the passage of the Seymour-Campbell Act. This act, printed in the

regulation section of the Matriculation Resource Manual (1998), had three primary goals:

1.   Ensure equal educational opportunities for all Californians.

2.   Ensure that students receive educational services necessary to optimize

       their opportunities for success.

3.   Provide students with the information to establish realistic educational

       goals, and ensure that the matriculation process does not exclude students

       from receiving appropriate educational services at community colleges. (p.

       22)

Matriculation is a categorically funded program that is designed to provide

appropriate assessment, orientation, advisement and follow-up services to any student

enrolled in an academic class. The California State Chancellor's office offers categorical

funding and rigid mandates to ensure students are appropriately assessed and advised of

campus programs that could enhance academic success.

The task given to matriculation departments throughout the state is to provide

services that address the areas that negatively impact retention and persistence. The

California State Chancellor's office outlines eight areas that make up the major

components of matriculation. The eight components include: admission, assessment, orientation, advisement, follow-up, training coordination, research and prerequisite implementation. Probation intervention falls under the follow-up component.

According to the California Education Code, each college is responsible for assisting students in achieving their educational goals. According to the regulation section of the Matriculation Resource Manual (1998):

> The follow-up system shall ensure that the academic progress of each student is regularly monitored to detect early signs of academic difficulty, and students shall be provided with advice or referral to specialized services or curriculum offerings where necessary. Districts shall also identify and refer to counseling or advisement, as appropriate pursuant to Section 55523(a), any students who have not declared a specific educational goal as required by Section 55530, who are enrolled in pre-collegiate basic skills courses, or who have been placed on probation. (p. 17)

The follow-up component for matriculation mandates that any student, who is in academic jeopardy, should be notified of his academic standing and should be provided with support services that lead to academic persistence. This component, according to the regulations section of the Matriculation Resource Manual (1998), is designed to:

> …ensure that the academic progress of each student is regularly monitored to detect early signs of academic difficulty, and students shall be provided with advice or referral to specialized services or curriculum offerings where necessary. Districts shall also identify and refer to counseling or advisement, as appropriate pursuant to Section 55523(A), any students who have not declared a specific

educational goal as required by Section 55530, who are enrolled in pre-collegiate basic skills courses, or who have been placed on probation. (p. 17)

Students attend community colleges for various reasons. Courses for personal development or career enhancement are offered through the community college system at affordable prices and often attract the lifelong learner, who prefers the lower tuition and convenience of a community college. At the time of application, students are asked to note on their application if their academic goal includes degree attainment. Students not pursuing certificate or degree attainment should not be considered when researching persistence, as this group of students often meet their academic goals within the course of 1 semester.

Often, returning adult students already have acquired a bachelor's degree, or higher, and are not seeking traditional degree attainment. When determining the characteristics of an effective intervention program, it is critical to understand the students to whom we are providing services. Students who are pursuing personal development or skill enhancement should not be considered failures or dropouts if they do not have the desire to continue beyond the courses required for their personal goal. While all students are encouraged to participate in the matriculation process, students attaining an academic degree or certificate or those with undecided educational goals are required to participate.

The California Community College system excels at transferring students to 4-year colleges and universities. Transfer students enter a community college in order to complete their basic educational requirements with the goal of transferring to a 4-year university. Since there are no standards for admission, except that a student is at least 18

years old and/or has a high school diploma or equivalent, the community college attracts students who otherwise may not be able to attend college. Referred to as open enrollment this policy was initiated in order to afford every California resident the opportunity to attain a college degree (Matriculation Resource Manual, 1998).

The open-enrollment policy lends itself to several issues regarding retention. Retention is impacted by factors that include the lack of financial resources and/or family support, the lack of necessary skills to succeed and previous academic difficulties including poor academic performance. Students often enter the college with a history of poor time management or lack the necessary study skills required to attain their academic goals. Others enter a community college because of a lack of goals and founder because they do not have stated academic goals. Marginal students may meet with frustration as they place themselves in courses above their academic skill level, and high achievers may experience frustration by selecting remedial courses that lack the stimulation required to maintain their interest.

It is realized that some students do not persist because of personal problems, such as family, financial or work pressures, while other students leave because of their inability to maintain academic standards. Prior to 1988, students entered the campus with the notion of the right to fail; however, this belief was replaced with the belief in the right to succeed. The idea of academic intervention is not unique, but few colleges mandate participation and even fewer students make use of the support services designed to assist them in meeting their academic goals. The integration of matriculation services onto community college campuses is multifaceted and necessitates the collaborative efforts of administration, faculty and support services (Matriculation Resource Manual, 1998).

A Retention Model

Concern for retention originated more than a decade prior to the initiation of matriculation programs throughout the California community colleges. In 1975, Vincent Tinto developed a model of retention that stressed the need to look at pre-entry college attributes. He concluded that a student's background, the level of family support, previous academic experience and abilities lead to the development of personal goals and academic engagement. The academic environment influences the student only to the extent that previous experience does not create discord with the academic and social systems of the college the student attends (Tinto, 1975).

Tinto's model is the foundation used by many colleges as they attempt to identify the factors that impact student success. While some colleges are addressing student success issues through comprehensive student support programs, inclusive of personal, academic and career counseling, others are attempting early assessment of basic skills in English and math. Students exhibiting the need for remedial services are referred to courses that have been designed to enhance basic skills.

Alan Seidman (1996) reports that despite our efforts, student graduation rates in both 4-year and 2-year colleges have experienced a slight downward trend from 1983 to 1990. Seidman maintains his support of Tinto's model but poses another hypothesis for this trend. Seidman observes that there is no nationally accepted definition of retention. This poses an obvious problem in program comparison and leads to "conflicting and inaccurate results of our interventions" (Seidman, 1996, p. 19).

The first step to resolving this issue is to develop a nationally used definition of retention. Once retention is defined, it should be categorized further into the following three areas: course, program and student retention (Seidman, 1996).

Seidman (1996) defines course retention as the number of students who persist past the census date and earn an A-D grade at the conclusion of the semester. Utilizing this approach facilitates the collection of data during each year of the college experience. It allows educators to monitor full-time as well as part-time students enabling us to look at courses at the higher end of the degree sequence. Seidman suggests this data will unlock the key to why certain courses have higher retention rates. This information could lead to the development of persistence strategies for all students.

Seidman (1996) wrote:

Program retention/attrition data is the current traditional way to look at retention/attrition. It looks at the traditional full-time first-year student and tracks him/her over a period of time [usually six years for four-year colleges and three years for two-year colleges to ascertain whether or not the student graduated in the intended major. (p. 20)

Early identification and intensive intervention may make a difference in determining if a student will leave an institution prematurely. Colleges have the data to identify students who were unsuccessful in past semesters. Using this data, an at-risk student profile can be developed. Seidman (1996) wrote:

As students apply and are accepted, profile data can be used to identify at risk students and intervention strategies could be developed and implemented prior to actual course enrollment and continue throughout each semester of the student's

college career. This early and intensive intervention can then be measured to see whether or not it has made a difference in course, program and student retention. Data collection is key to identification of at risk students which may vary at each individual institution based on profile data. Family information, which is usually not now collected, is important and could include socioeconomic level, parent educational level and household makeup. (p. 20)

Collecting data from the time of student enrollment can assist colleges in the development of effective programs by identifying students who may need assistance.

Variables for Success

Most college students make a decision to attend college in order to attain a higher degree of success in their professional life. Realizing that the average individual will change careers four to seven times it is imperative that educators understand they will be teaching students with varied professional and personal experiences (Gardner, 1998).

Edward Anderson (1998) outlines the characteristics of college students and defines the developmental stages of the typical college freshman. As students strive for greater degrees of independence, they perceive a college education as a means to an end, one that will ensure financial security. The development stages Anderson refers to are outlined as follows:

1.　Clarifying the person they want to be and the careers that will afford them the best opportunity to be that person;

2.　Acting independently and becoming financially independent;

3.　Clarifying values and beliefs, and making them personal;

4.   Forming positive concepts of themselves as learners with intellectual capabilities;

5.   Learning to form intimate love relationships;

6.   Solidifying concepts of themselves as male or female—forming a sexual identity that is consistent with values and aspirations;

7.   Becoming more comfortable with change through increased awareness of interests, skills and talents, and through making informed decisions;

8.   Becoming more confident in a variety of circumstances and with diverse individuals;

9.   Experiencing themselves as real—expressing their unique personhood as opposed to wearing facades, meeting others expectations, or playing roles and games.

Anderson's research supports the need to view college students from a holistic perspective because difficulty experienced in any of the developmental areas will impact performance in the classroom.

The Role of the College

In attempting to ascertain the most effective manner to address student retention and success, Lana Low suggests campus retention is a campus issue. Responsibility for student success cannot lie strictly within one area or campus department (Low, 1998 a).

Traditionally, student service departments have been tasked with addressing students who are in need of academic and/or remedial assistance. The initiation of matriculation programs insured initial assessment of basic skills for all incoming students planning to attain a degree. Though the efforts of professionals involved in the

matriculation process have met with mixed reviews, Low asserts that long-term retention must be integrated into all levels and disciplines on the college campus. Low (1998 a) suggests that there are several steps any successful intervention program must include. Low's (1998 a) six steps are as follows:

1. Assess campus readiness. A strong institutional commitment to retention must be in place. This begins with a shared understanding of common goals among key campus constituents who are speaking with one voice. Such high levels of commitment, when accompanied by campus wide involvement, can quickly give rise to improved retention.

2. Set goals by identifying issues you can resolve. Comprehensive, quantitative and qualitative institutional data must inform the retention goals for your institution. Carefully examine all sources of survey data, as well as input from faculty, staff, students and administrators.

3. Integrate new retention strategies within existing programs and services. Adding new programs and services is not necessarily the solution for reducing attrition on your campus, especially if the infrastructure is not in place to support them. It is far better to begin by focusing on existing programs and services as the delivery vehicles for any new initiatives. In other words, build on your current successes.

4. Develop an evaluation plan for each new strategy. For each strategy identified, the campus unit responsible must identify appropriate measures to demonstrate effectiveness and impact of strategy. This step is critical for both internal and external accountability.

5. Establish reasonable timelines and assemble the resources needed. Realistic timelines and availability of resources must be considered when establishing retention goals. Insufficient commitment of both human and financial resources is one of the primary reasons retention efforts fail to achieve desired outcomes.

6. Recognize, reward and celebrate your successes. The most successful institutions are steeped in long and time-honored traditions of celebration that signal the accomplishments of their campuses. The way institutions recognize and reward both their internal and external constituents speaks volumes about the value placed in individual success in the classroom, on the athletic field, in campus offices, in the board room and beyond.

Low's beliefs were shared by many of the colleges found in this research. Colleges meeting with success exhibited collaborative support among faculty, staff and administrators. Student retention became everyone's responsibility, and students benefited from the integrated approach that became part of the campus climate.

The researcher posted a message to a national list service group, known as Probation, Dismissal and Reinstatement Interest Group, to ascertain what role other colleges have assumed. In addition to interest expressed by subscribers who desired the results of this research, several colleges shared their expertise.

Tracy Harris from Minnesota State University explained that a new probation program was recently initiated on her campus despite some members of her faculty expressing concern about mandatory participation. MSU requires all students on probation to attend an intake meeting during which time the student completes a self-

assessment. The student then meets with an advisor to develop a student success contract. The advisor may direct the student to workshops on study skills or time management courses. Although there are no specific courses for the student to attend, time management issues are weaved throughout many of the freshman courses. Some probationary students are required to meet with their academic advisor several times during the semester, and the student is required to submit midterm reports to the advisor (T. Harris, personal communication, March 9, 2000).

At Bowling Green State University, the College of Health and Human Services has a mandatory course for first-time probationers. Graduate assistants teach the course through the College Student Personnel program. During the last 5 years, 52% of students who took the course persisted and only 6% have been suspended. During the same period, 42% left the institution. Students who participate in the program earn a letter grade that is worth one unit, and any student who falls below a 1.50 grade-point average is required to attend or is dismissed from the campus. When comparing these results to another program on campus, which does not offer intervention, the program without intervention found only 36% of the probation students were still persisting and 52% had left college (M. Webb, personal communication, March 8, 2000).

Johanna Matyas is an academic advisor at Kent State University and is responsible for a program entitled LEAP-Learning to Establish Academic Priorities. This is a mandatory course for all reinstated students. Prior to meeting with an advisor, the student submits a reinstatement appeal detailing the circumstances that lead to probationary status. This appeal may include their academic plan and any supporting documentation. Students then meet with an academic advisor to discuss their appeal and

are referred to the LEAP seminar. The seminar discusses campus resources, goal setting, time management strategies and explains the number of quality points a student needs to remove themselves from probationary status. Participants are improving retention rates and state the seminar is worthwhile (J. Matyas, personal communication, February 29, 2000).

Lake Area Technical Institute requires students on probation to meet with a committee to explain their probationary status. The primary purpose of the committee is to help a student identify the issues impacting success and ultimately connect the student to services that may provide assistance. Students who fail to participate are asked to leave (J. Bergh, personal communication, February 29, 2000).

The Role of the Admissions Department

Most colleges with intervention programs initiate services after the student has been enrolled. Alan Seidman would assert that retention should begin when the prospective student is selecting a college. Seidman (1989) wrote:

> The process of recruitment is not exclusive of retention. Rather, they are interrelated. A good recruitment program is in essence a good retention process, while a good retention process is a good recruitment process. In other words, matching student attributes with institutional attributes will contribute to student satisfaction with the institution. This in turn will reflect positively on the institution as satisfied customers relate their experiences to others. (p. 45)

California community colleges profess a belief in open enrollment. This philosophy does not allow community colleges to scrutinize prospective students. Students attend the community college system with diverse needs and backgrounds.

Unlike private 4-year colleges, the system does not allow students to be screened out. Although the philosophy facilitates the process of a college education for anyone who desires one, it prevents the college from scrutinizing applications or limiting the number of students accepted. The fundamental mission of the California Community College system creates the need for programs to assist students needing remedial assistance, as this group makes up a large percentage of the students who choose this route toward an academic degree (Seidman, 1995).

The role of the admissions department may be one of the most pivotal, as this is often the department responsible for outreach. If admission materials, student expectations and campus strengths are shared with the student prior to registration, the student has the opportunity to make an informed choice. Students who achieve a good match will meet with less frustration when compared to students who find themselves in the wrong program or course level (Noel, 1976).

In addition to admission criteria, colleges need to provide the type of information that will enable the perspective student to make an informed choice. Actual anticipated costs, expected performance, descriptions of student resources and services and various academic options offered by the college are examples of the type of information students need to have to make an informed decision. Having accurate information will increase retention by insuring student satisfaction prior to student enrollment (Ramist, 1981 b).

Student Expectations

Randi Levitz (1998) of U.S.A Group Noel-Levitz, a pioneer of student retention strategies, suggests the first steps in retention include understanding the expectations and belief systems students bring to campus. Initial student expectations vary from

documented experience, and failure to reach expectations impacts persistence, academic

performance and retention. For example, students are not prepared for the amount of out

time they need to spend studying or find it difficult to fit in the social milieu. Levitz's

research concluded that while only 1% of an incoming freshman class expects to drop out

of colleges, 34% actually leave (Levitz, 1998).

Vincent Tinto would support Levitz findings but asserts a difference between

"dropping out" and "stopping out" (Tinto, 1993, p. 26). Tinto reminds his readers that

many students do choose to leave college only to return later in life. He calls this concept

stopping out, as their withdrawal from higher education is temporary. Tinto wrote:

> Among community college entrants, only 12% of regularly admitted students and
>
> 3% of open admission students completed their degree programs on time. After
>
> five years those figures rose to 43 and 25 percent respectively, and after nine
>
> years to 45 and 27 percent respectively. (p. 26)

Levitz continues her differentiation between expectations and reality with the

following: 1% of students expect to fail a course; however, 12%-18% actually fail. Of

incoming students, 80% expect degree attainment within the prescribed 2- to 4-year time

frame, yet 50%-75% actually require additional time to complete their degree. While only

13% initially think they will change majors, 60%-75% eventually change majors. Levitz

determined that 43% of students attending college, regardless of whether it is a 2-year

college or 4-year university, require an additional year of study prior to degree attainment

(Levitz, 1998).

Levitz asserts there are areas of retention that need to be addressed by

instructional faculty. Expectations and beliefs of faculty members are very different from

the students they teach. Faculty members perceive that attainment of a college education is the primary goal of the student, while students perceive college as a means to achieve a goal. Simply stated, students value their education because it is a means to an end. Education is necessary to attain a job, embark upon a career or support an anticipated lifestyle, whereas faculty members value the process of attaining an education. Academic success is impacted by both internal and external factors. Faculty members, who are sensitive to student needs, can impact retention and persistence.

Factors that Contribute to Academic Difficulty

Factors that contribute to academic problems are usually evidenced prior to the start of an academic career. Levitz outlines five areas that impact student success. These five areas include personal, social, academic, life issues and institutional problems. Institutional awareness of these areas enables faculty and administrators to develop intervention programs that contribute to student success.

Personal problems are the issues that students experience or bring to the campus and may include feelings of isolation and insecurity, unrealistic expectations, lack of personal discipline or motivation or student-institution mismatch (Levitz, 1998). Social barriers refer to influences of a negative peer group, feelings of alienation and social isolation, lack of involvement in college activities and limited interaction with faculty. Academically, this group of students may be unprepared and in need of remedial work, may have poor study habits, may be attending college on a part-time basis and are often unsure of their academic and career goals.

External factors also impact student success. Life issues such as financial difficulties, job conflict, family or health problems impact student success. Colleges that

are unprepared, or unwilling, to view the student holistically may contribute to student attrition.

It is understood that the first four areas of Levitz's research may be beyond the scope of the institution, but her fifth area is aimed specifically at student success issues that are influenced by the leadership of the college. These institutional issues include scheduling problems, administrative errors, student desire to complete academic tracks not available at the campus, negative classroom atmosphere and low quality instruction. For the 51% of students who come to college with the belief that they won't be satisfied, or for those who are marginally involved, it is critical during administrative strategic planning sessions to realize it does not take much to lose them (Levitz, 1998).

Edward Hallberg (Hallberg & Aschieris, 1997) supports the need to view the student from a holistic perspective, and his research complements that done by Levitz. Hallberg views student success from eight vectors. His research has resulted in an assessment tool called the College Success Factors Inventory. Widely used throughout colleges in California, Hallberg's assessment tool encourages colleges to administer the inventory after admission but prior to registration. The 30-minute assessment results in individual and specific placement on each of the eight vectors. Each vector has a watch line; students who place below a watch line on any vector should be given strategies to address the issues in order to meet with success.

Hallberg's eight vectors include: personal responsibility, competition, health and wellness, task precision, expectations, time management, college involvement and family or significant other involvement. He asserts that if these areas are identified early, the college can help the student identify problems during the student's initial semester. Early

identification enables the student to develop strategies that lead to success before the student begins to experience academic difficulty (Hallberg & Aschieris, 1997).

In researching 1,500 dropouts from 46 institutions, Levitz found that 46.1% earned a grade-point average that placed them in the category of academic probation. Academic probation is defined as attaining below a 2.0 grade-point average on a 0.0-4.0 scale. Her research suggests that college persistence is influenced by factors other than academic performance, as 53.9% of the students who left these institutions did not leave as a result of academic performance but other factors (Levitz, 1998).

As Levitz continued her research, she sampled students who did not enroll for a subsequent third semester. Of those students, 54.6% earned a grade-point average of 2.0 or lower. This research supports the need to develop intervention programs that are initiated following the first semester of student attendance. By the time students concludes the first year with a grade-point average of 2.0 or less, they often self-select out of courses and decide to leave college (Levitz, 1998).

Progress probation is defined as dropping, or withdrawing, from more than 50% of the courses for which the student originally registered. Factors that influence progress probation are often different from those that influence academic probation. Issues of childcare, financial support, personal or family obligations or employment/class conflicts impede highly motivated individuals from pursuing an academic degree. Success strategies for students on progress probation will most likely be very different from the strategies suggested to a student on academic probation (Levitz, 1998).

Research suggests there are programs that colleges could institutionalize in order to help students meet with success. The primary goal of the programs should be to

identify at-risk students and provide strategies for success prior to the student experiencing academic difficulties. Limited fiscal resources will require colleges to identify those students who are most receptive to intervention. Levitz proposes that the distribution for dropout proneness (Levitz, 1998) is exemplified in the traditional bell-shaped curve. There are students at either end who will persist, or leave, regardless of intervention strategies. Levitz suggests that attention should be provided to the group that falls in the middle of the curve, as this group will allow educators to influence their behavior.

Existing Strategies

Colleges should begin with a retention team that is committed to student retention. Engagement of students is not a passive process, and faculty will need to assume the initiative to work with students who are in jeopardy. Primary focus should be on the individual needs, attitudes and motivational levels of the student population targeted.

Levitz supports intrusive strategies and stresses these proactive approaches must be used to reach freshmen before the students have the opportunity to experience feelings of failure, disappointment and confusion (Levitz, 1998). The immediate focus should be the initiation of a program with the long-term goal of creating a shift in the culture of the college. Private colleges and universities have the luxury of recruiting students that fit the cultural climate and prescribed academic standards; community colleges do not have the ability to screen prospective students nor do most 2-year colleges have residential facilities. These two aspects create different and difficult obstacles for community college programs.

Levitz's research outlines the characteristics of existing programs that are meeting with success. These characteristics include orientations for all students, early-alert programs based on affective needs, advising, retention-based registration, mentoring programs, early warning systems and the development of learning communities (Levitz, 1998).

Mandatory orientation services are critical, as students often overrate their abilities. It is critical for students to understand campus norms, find a niche and develop a strong foundation. Through the orientation process, students learn to transfer existing skills in order to meet with campus success. Students can be taught to develop relationships with faculty, to resist peer pressure and, most important, to ask for help in order to facilitate the use of student support services both on the campus and in the surrounding community (Gardner, 1998).

The process of engaging the student requires active participation and the desire to bring necessary services to the areas in which students will access these services. For students who have prior college credit, proper advisement will assist with transcript review and analysis, provide appropriate guidance and assist the student with goal clarification. Most important, students who fear failure can develop trusting relationships with a faculty member who reinforces the need to take action (Levitz, 1998).

Levitz stresses that the most successful retention programs are highly structured. Successful programs are interlocked with other services and programs, mandate extensive and intensive student contact, are based on a strategy of engagement, place emphasis on the quality of faculty and staff, focus on affective and cognitive needs and track the level of individual student satisfaction. Academic advisement insures appropriate course

placement and selection while assisting the student to avoid a semester schedule with too many high requirement courses.

Laurie Schreiner developed a retention program at Eastern College in Pennsylvania. Schreiner's program focuses on the individual needs of each student. At-risk students are identified upon entrance, and individualized success plans are developed. Intrusive strategies are implemented before the student has the opportunity to experience failure. In order to make an intervention program effective, Schreiner asserts the need for buy in from campus administrators, faculty and staff. Administrative and fiscal support must be attained, as high-level administrators should act as a catalyst (Schreiner, 1998).

Edward Anderson and Bill McGuire provide guiding principles that relate to student success. Anderson and McGuire assert that although students may have met eligibility requirements, the students' college success is determined by what they do once they are admitted to the college. Although one assumes students leave college because of their inability to acquire the required grades, most students leave because of disillusionment, discouragement and reduced motivation. Students who persist make a conscious decision to become involved personally and ascribe to quality both academically and socially (Anderson, 1998 b; McGuire, 1998).

In a conference presentation Anderson and McGuire (1998) stated:

...student self referral does not work as a mode of operation in promoting persistence. Students who need services most refer themselves least, or only at crisis points. Promoting persistence thus requires the campus community to take

the initiative in outreach and in a timely fashion. (E. Anderson, personal communication, July 1998).

The faculty tasked with providing prescriptions to the student must insure they have a similar support system for themselves, as this type of work takes a tremendous amount of personal energy and commitment.

When Nancy McDaniel (1998) and Kathryn Jarvis (1998) were tasked with the mission of creating a Student Success Center at Auburn University in Alabama, they looked at the development of a holistic program. The center they created provides academic support, student counseling, career development and specialized services for incoming freshman.

When developing the concept, McDaniel and Jarvis reviewed and outlined each academic year and focused on the issues that could impact retention at each stage. Once a profile of high-risk times was complete, programs were developed and aligned to create a referral map. Faculty and staff were encouraged to refer students to the center in order to facilitate utilization of campus resources. Research results indicated an increase in persistence among all students and an overall increase in persistence of 2.8%, as the college went from a persistence rate of 78.7% in 1993 to 81.5% in 1996. More significant was the 13.6% increase in persistence among African American students, whose persistence rates went from 62.9% to 76.5% (Jarvis,1998; McDaniel, 1998).

Miami University, located in southwestern Ohio, shared the results of a 5-year review of their retention program at the 1998 National Conference on Student Retention. Linda Dixon, assistant dean of Student Services, found several common factors affecting retention. These factors include personal reasons, grade-point average, commitment to

education, utility to future employment, time-management skills, family and work problems, economic problems, role conflict, psychological influences and job conflicts. Once the factors that influence retention were specified, research was conducted to determine what type of strategies could be developed to assist with persistence (Dixon, 1998).

Dixon's strategies can be divided into institutional commitment and program enhancement. She determined that colleges must make a financial commitment to maintain the support services that facilitate persistence. Academic advisors must have a genuine interest in working with the student population that is referred because of academic difficulties, and personnel, who are willing to expend personal energy in outreach and recruitment of at-risk students, need to be identified. In addition, marketing efforts must be initiated to solicit the support of instructional faculty. Instructional faculty members need to be aware of their role in student retention. Faculty should refer under-prepared students to appropriate support services prior to the end of the semester in order for the student to receive comprehensive tutorial or support services (Dixon, 1998).

One recommendation, unique to Miami University, is the goal of enhancing communication between departments, programs and divisions in order to institutionalize student retention efforts. This requires the development of sensitivity to students who are experiencing academic difficulties, as Dixon believes successful programs incorporate a high level of personal commitment and caring on the part of the instructor. Students need to be recognized for academic progress and for using support services and programs. Critical to the success of the Miami University program was the development of an early warning program that alerted students to difficulties each semester.

Early Alert Programs

Several community colleges have developed early alert programs. These

programs are designed to alert students, who are experiencing problems, early in a

semester in order to facilitate the use of support services. These efforts often meet with

minimal results, as there are no prescribed consequences for failure to participate in an

intervention process and students often show little desire to participate until their

academic performance is beyond repair.

The primary purpose of early alert programs is to identify students who are in

danger and provide intervention strategies that will assist the student in becoming

successful. Faculty members detract from the effectiveness of these programs by

believing they already have intervened on the student's behalf, or by complaining that the

early alert program is initiated too early in the semester and choosing not to submit

information on individual student's progress. Since most early alert programs are based

on grades or attendance, and feedback is submitted prior to the halfway point in the

semester, instructors also state they do not have adequate time to provide an accurate

assessment.

Saddleback College has had an early alert program since 1994, and the

Matriculation department has experienced resistance from faculty since the inception of

the program. The early alert program was changed to a Internet-based model for fall

1999, and revisions were solicited from the faculty who initially offered the most

resistance. Complaints that revolved around early submission have been eliminated, as

faculty now have until the end of the sixth week of the semester to respond. Rosters and

Scantron sheets have been replaced with a web page that will enable faculty simply to use

their computer to select the comments most appropriate for their students (Lindsay & Coutts, 1999).

Students at Saddleback have demonstrated behavioral changes, as they have been notified of potential academic difficulties, and they have attended special workshops, tutorial programs and used counseling services (Lindsay & Coutts, 1999).

In addition to a comprehensive support system, Miami University developed new programs designed to enhance success prior to the start of the fall semester. Commonly known as a bridge program, incoming students attend special summer orientation and reading programs. Miami University's mission statement includes an institutional commitment to provide academic and personal guidance for targeted students to ensure their completion of a degree through coordinated programs and services in cooperation with faculty and staff campus wide (Dixon, 1998).

A unique aspect of Miami University is its Scholastic Enhancement Program, which was developed to recommend immediate referral for students who did not meet the college's admission requirements. A committee reviewed incoming freshmen applications, and students were determined to be eligible for the enhancement program based on specific, and quantifiable, characteristics. Students were considered eligible for the enhancement program if they had ACT scores lower than 20, were ranked in the bottom 50% of their high school class and had high school grade-point averages of 2.5 or less. College faculty met with referring high school teachers and counselors to become acquainted with their curriculum and to look at student-specific recommendations. The primary goal of the program is to provide special admission to high-risk students who are willing to participate in the enhancement program; complete a comprehensive assessment

package focused on writing, reading and study skills; and who agree to maintain contact with counselors from the enhancement program (Dixon, 1998).

The comprehensive assessment packet includes the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI) and the Nelson Denny Reading Test. In return, high-risk students are provided with peer support designed to build social and personal friendships with the goal of providing emotional support to the student in times of stress. Early academic advising and special courses are designed to build academic skills and abilities. Supplemental instruction provides exposure to successful role models and previous program participants.

Results were impressive, as first-year persistence rates were 95% for class one, 87% for class two, 95% for class three and 97% for class four. During the second year, persistence rates were 66%, 69% and 73% for the first three classes, respectively. Although persistence rates were high, when compared to colleges that lack this type of program, problematic issues still surfaced. Students voiced concern over the stigma of a special admissions label; the decentralized model created problems when looking to determine accountability; and philosophical differences became apparent in the area of academic advising. Not unique to Miami University are the differences of opinion that are voiced when speaking of intrusive intervention and referral versus a student's right to fail. A final concern centered on student motivation and how one assesses the motivational level of a student in academic jeopardy. If one believes motivation is inherent, then one would not support programs that teach motivational skill building (Dixon, 1998).

College bridge programs have experienced positive results for students who are identified as at-risk prior to entering the fall semester. The success of bridge programs has led some colleges to develop freshmen seminars for all incoming freshmen.

<u>Freshmen Seminars</u>

In 1997, the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition sought to ascertain statistics for first-year seminars in American higher education. Survey instruments were mailed to Academic Affairs vice presidents at all regionally accredited colleges with a student population greater than 100. Surveys were sent to 2,527 colleges and 1,336 or 52.9% responded. Of the respondents, 939 institutions or 70.3% reported that they offered a special course for first-year students that focused of student success strategies. As to the breakdown of the types of seminars, 68.8% of the colleges indicated their campus offers an extended orientation seminar that blends a variety of topics that impact student success. Only 10.4% indicated they offer a seminar with consistent content throughout all sections while 9.7% indicated that their campus offers academic seminars where the instructor determines course content. The remaining campuses, 11.1%, shared they offer basic study-skills courses, workshops or seminars (Noel & Levitz, 1998).

Student success was the theme for all respondents with the three most important goals being:

1.   Ease of transition and adjustment of students to the college environment.

2.   Development of academic skills.

3.   Providing an orientation to campus resources and facilities.

Course topics were commonly built around time management, career planning, familiarity with campus resources, development of academic skills and integration of the diversity on most college campuses. The majority of the courses, 76.6%, were offered for a letter grade, and the balance of courses was either pass/fail or not graded. Most of the seminars provide academic credit, and 87% were co-taught by faculty. Campus support varies. While 55.9% indicated a high level of support, 44.1% indicated medium to very low support of the program (USA Group, 1998).

Noel-Levitz's satisfaction survey revealed 10 aspects of highly successful intervention programs. Their research asserts the need for a comprehensive program that assists with transition, throughout all academic levels, with a strong and clear definition and philosophy. It is critical to put fiscal resources at the front of the program where students will be most likely to access support. Faculty and administrators need to be enlightened and informed of program benefits. Quantitative data needs to be collected, analyzed and disseminated in order to facilitate fiscal support and faculty efforts. Soliciting the college's best faculty and staff will insure a connection between faculty and student (USA Group, 1998).

In defining methods to front load students for success, the Noel-Levitz Group suggest intervention strategies be initiated during the summer prior to the freshman year. Schreiner (1998 b) asserts the importance of contacting prospective students and connecting them with student advisors or student ambassador programs. Identifying as much personal data about the student as possible assists with referrals to support programs prior to the student exhibiting a need for such services. The types of personal data the college may collect include: an understanding of the student's background, the

student's previous grade-point average, prior college experience, the reasons the student chose the college as well as ascertaining the student's affective needs and levels of motivation. Identifying students who are likely to be at risk early enables the college to provide intervention strategies in a timely fashion (USA Group, 1998).

In addition, identifying students who fall within the definition of high risk provides an opportunity for the college to be proactive. High-risk groups may include commuter students, minority students, first-generation students, nontraditional students, athletes and students with disabilities. Colleges should consider summer bridge classes, the primary purpose of which is preparation for college success (Levitz, 1998).

Randi Levitz (1998) and John Gardner (1998) also recommend mandatory attendance at orientation sessions, which should be conducted prior to the start of the semester and designed to inform students of the various support programs on campus. Extending orientation services throughout the semester enables students to discuss their expectations, voice their misconceptions and solicit practical advice from college mentors. Providing college credit for participation in this type of program encourages participation and demonstrates the college's belief in the importance of such programs. Student tracking enables counseling faculty to follow up on referrals and enhances student accountability (USA Group, 1998).

Curriculum should be reviewed in order to insure the first-year course schedule helps students become independent learners. Strategies may include smaller class sizes, ensuring appropriate recommendations for unit offerings and basic skill assessment to insure proper placement in math and English courses. The addition of ongoing workshops, support groups and student activities support student growth and

development. Mentoring programs should target groups of students such as at-risk students, honors students, minority students, scholarship recipients and other groups the college may identify as benefiting from additional services (Schreiner, 1998).

Intrusive Intervention

The debate continues between advocates for intrusive intervention and advocates for the student's decision to self-select. Vincent Tinto (1993) believes mandatory participation will engage high-risk college students and force them to access services, as failure to engage results in high rates of attrition. John Gardner (1998) requires all students in his college success class to join a campus committee or social club, as he asserts academic success is directly associated with campus integration. Students must learn how to use the library, how to study and how to connect class activities to life experience. Pairing of the college success course with courses that have high rates of failure and target basic skill such as math and English should impact persistence and retention positively.

Orientation classes are offered at many colleges, but few appear to mandate any type of intervention for students. Walter Earl researched intrusive intervention in 1987; more than a decade later we have made little progress in addressing retention through mandatory programs. Earl (1987) wrote:

> …more than one third of all entering freshmen will not be continuous students into a sophomore year. Academic and orientation interventions are usually based on the assumption that students will self-identify their needs and seek help. The intrusive model is an alternative intervention strategy based on the theory that that

students will respond to direct contact in which problems in their academic life are identified and assistance offered. (p. v)

Earl followed the progress of 74 students who had been placed on academic probation and who participated in an intrusive intervention program. The students received counseling, and factors critical to their success were identified through the counseling sessions. Earl (1987) wrote:

> At the end of their sophomore year, three semesters later, students in the experimental sample had a statistically higher semester and cumulative grade point average than those in the control group. The highest grades and retention rate was attained by the experimental students enrolled in the orientation class. Probationary students involved in intrusive intervention had significantly higher grade point averages and persisted at a significantly higher rate after three semesters than probationary students in a matched control sample. The most successful students were those enrolled in the orientation class. (p. v)

When to Initiate Services

On campuses where strategies are offered to assist students, initiation of intervention usually is delayed until the student is experiencing academic difficulties. Students placed on academic or progress probation often disregard notification until they are in significant jeopardy and are candidates for dismissal from the campus.

The Educational Code of California requires colleges to conduct a postenrollment evaluation of each student's progress and requires advisement or counseling for students who are on academic probation. Title V supports this by requiring colleges to develop programs that monitor student progress and detect academic difficulty. Unfortunately, the

process is inconsistent and quality of services varies significantly among colleges (Matriculation Resource Manual, 1998).

Summary

It is the purpose of this study to differentiate and evaluate the effectiveness of various academic intervention methods used on college campuses in order to identify effective intervention characteristics and propose a model that will assist community colleges in initiating probation intervention programs that will impact student persistence positively.

Community colleges differ in minimal admission criteria, as they are ruled by an open admission criteria policy. The mission of the California Community College system is to provide a higher level of education to anyone with the desire to attend college. As a result, community colleges cannot select students and are often in the position of providing college-level courses to students who may have been rejected from 4-year institutions. In 1998, the California State College system announced its decision to decrease the number of students requiring remedial education by 10% per year with the intent of facilitating the use of the community college system to attain remedial skills. Traditional 4-year students are now turning, in increased numbers, to the community college to complete courses identified as basic skills.

Concurrent high school enrollment, often caused by overcrowding at the high school level, is creating a surge in high school juniors and seniors leaving their high school campuses to take courses at local community colleges. Colleges receive state apportionment but do not charge tuition to high school students. The result is a depletion

of resources for all students on the campus because of the increased demand for support services by students still involved in the K-12 educational system.

A third factor impacting community colleges is the lack of residential living opportunities that foster campus integration. Commuter students have less opportunity to become integrated onto the campus, as this population frequently leaves campus once its members have attended classes. This transience does not facilitate the voluntary utilization of campus resources such as tutorial labs, counseling and various support programs.

The average age of the community college student is higher than that of the average freshman entering a private college or university. As a result, community college students often have life circumstances that make the attainment of a certificate or degree more difficult. Employment, family and financial obligations often take precedence over class attendance and course requirements. Many of the students attending community colleges are single parents, first-generation college students or English as a second language students; these variables make the attainment of their goals more complicated. Without special programs and incentives, it is difficult to get these students to the programs designed to promote academic persistence. Often finding themselves unsuccessful because of lower grade-point averages, these students will chose to leave the campus possibly internalizing their inability to achieve their goals.

Four-year private colleges have taken the lead in the area of student retention. Lacking state subsidy, private colleges realize that fiscal solvency is dependent upon student retention and persistence. California Community Colleges have enjoyed the

benefits of state support and have not been dependent upon student persistence to fund instructional programs.

Existing strategies include mandatory participation in matriculation programs, funded with categorical money, designed to assess basic skills and provide orientation to college resources at the time of admission. California Community Colleges are required to provide feedback every semester to students who exhibit academic difficulties. It is assumed that an early warning of academic deficiency will motivate the student to access services that would support academic success. In order to address this need, early alert programs have been developed, enabling faculty to notify students in academic jeopardy prior to midterm examinations.

Students who find themselves on academic probation may be referred to counseling. In order to facilitate the use of support programs, some colleges have limited subsequent semester registration until the student meets with a counselor and develops strategies for future success. The debate continues as to whether mandatory or intrusive intervention should be applied to every student on probation, as some counseling professionals believe that this is not the role of the community college.

Characteristics of effective programs vary. While most colleges are focusing on the needs of the student, some colleges are attempting to change the campus climate. Examples of campus change include reviewing course scheduling, campus facilities and assessing and improving the degree of administrative support.

Student-focused programs seek to determine the characteristics of students who enter the college at risk. The underlying belief system is early identification will facilitate student insight and support the realization that the student is ultimately the one

responsible for academic success. Identification of problematic areas encourages the student to assume personal responsibility for any area that may present an obstacle to academic success.

The characteristics that will be reviewed in this study include the following:

1. The role and effectiveness of intrusive intervention.

2. Determining how funding is provided and ascertaining the need for institutional support of the probation intervention program.

3. Determining how students are identified and at what point students are contacted.

4. Ascertaining who is primarily responsible for the administration and delivery of the program.

5. Determining what, if any, student characteristics the college considers and at what point intervention is implemented.

6. Uncovering what types of intervention services are available on the campus.

7. Determining the factors that will enhance, as well as impede, student success and persistence.

Finding probation intervention programs that are successful and easily replicated should benefit the student and the college. It is anticipated that this study will identify the characteristics of effective intervention programs in order to develop a model of best practices for institutionalization effectiveness for the 107 community colleges in California.

Based on the literature review and a review of colleges offering intervention programs, the colleges depicted in Table 1 have been identified to participate in this study.

Table 1

Colleges Identified to Be Interviewed

College
Bowling Green State College, Kentucky
Citrus College, California
Kent University, Florida
L.A. Southwest College, California
Lake Area Technical School, South Dakota
Long Beach Community College, California
Lassen College, California
Minnesota State University, Manako, Minnesota
Onondaga Community College Syracuse, New York
Riverside College, California
San Diego College, California
Santa Fe Community College, Gainesville, Florida
Santa Monica College, California
Skyline College, California
UC Santa Barbara, California
Eastern College, Ohio
Miami University, Ohio

Note. Colleges initially identified for interview, not all participated in this study.

Chapter Two

Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology used by the researcher. It will provide

information as to how participating colleges were selected, how the instrument was

developed and how data was collected for analysis.

Problem Statement

Although academic intervention is supported by the California State Chancellor's

office, there are no policies that mandate what specific types of intervention are

appropriate. Similarly, there are no accountability standards against which colleges are

measured. The California State Chancellor's office does not offer a compendium of best

practices that would assist individual colleges in either adopting a plan for

implementation or customizing a suggested plan to meet individual campus needs. As a

result, few community colleges offer effective intervention services, and more than

400,000 students leave the California community college system at the conclusion of

their first year (Tinto, 1993). This high rate of attrition has a detrimental effect on fiscal

solvency, as many colleges are paid based on student head count; therefore, some

community colleges are pursuing student retention strategies.

To ensure some level of intervention is imposed on students, community colleges

in California are subject to matriculation site reviews. Utilizing peer review experts, the

purpose of the site review is to determine adherence with each of the eight matriculation

components. At the time of the review, colleges can request technical assistance for

program development. Unfortunately, the lack of a clear mandate often impedes the

development of programs that could have a positive impact on student retention.

Statement of Purpose

It was the purpose of this study to differentiate and evaluate the effectiveness of various academic intervention methods used on college campuses in order to identify effective intervention characteristics. Once characteristics were identified, the researcher proposed a compendium of best practices to assist community colleges in initiating probation intervention programs designed to impact student persistence positively.

In order to accomplish this purpose, the researcher identified colleges with effective probation intervention programs through the literature review, and determined the characteristics what makes these programs successful. The information attained was synthesized, and a compendium of best practices was developed.

It is recognized that the characteristics of community college students are different from traditional 4-year college students. Although previous research has attempted to focus on profiling student characteristics, there are few programs that shift the focus of retention from identifying and changing the student to identifying and changing the cultural philosophy of the campus.

Research Question

This study attempted to answer the following research question: What are the characteristics of an intervention program that will help California community colleges initiate probation intervention programs and impact student persistence positively?

Research Design

This was a descriptive study in which the researcher sought to determine the characteristics of effective probation intervention programs already implemented on college campuses. Information was gathered through a series of semi-structured

interviews. This type of interview process enabled the researcher to ask a core group of structured questions followed by probing questions that sought to identify "underlying factors or relationships which are too complex or elusive to encompass in more straight-forward questions" (Isaac, 1995, p. 147).

This study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, through an in-depth review of the literature completed in chapter one, colleges and universities that had successful intervention programs were identified.

In the second phase of the study, key administrators responsible for the operation of these intervention programs were interviewed to determine key characteristics of their respective programs.

In the final phase of this research, key characteristics identified in the second phase were blended into a compendium of best practices that can be used by the California Community College system.

Target Population

The target population for this study was administrators responsible for the management of probation intervention programs in colleges throughout the United States. Included in this population were matriculation coordinators responsible for the management of the eight matriculation components in the 107 community colleges in California. It is recognized that an effective probation intervention program will most likely be found under follow up, which is the fifth component of matriculation. (Matriculation Resource Manual, 1998)

Sample

    This study focused on colleges with academic intervention programs already in place. Colleges were identified through the literature review in chapter one, personal contact and a review of college publications.

    According to Isaac (1995), this study lent itself to criterion sampling because the researcher only interviewed colleges that professed to have an effective academic intervention program. This type of sampling "sets out to understand cases which are likely to be information rich because they may reveal major system strengths leading to program improvement" (Isaac, 1995, p. 224). Criterion sampling is a category of purposive sampling. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

    Patton (1990) wrote:

    ...the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance of the research, thus determining purposeful sampling. (p. 169)

    "To begin purposeful sampling, you must first determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p 69) prefer the term criterion-based selection to the terms purposive or purposeful sampling. In criterion-based selection you "create a list of attributes essential"(1993, p. 70) to your study and then "proceed to find or locate a unit matching the list" (1993, p. 70). "The criteria you establish for purposeful sampling

directly reflects the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

The review of the literature in chapter one yielded the following list of colleges. Table 2 lists the colleges in alphabetical order and the name of the contact person.

Table 2

Colleges Interviewed

College	Contact Person
Bowling Green State College	Matthew Webb
Citrus	Arthur Briones
Kent	Johanna Matyas
L.A. Southwest	Phyllis Braxton
Lake Area Technical School	Jeannie Bergh
Long Beach Community College	Darlene Bartosik
Minnesota State University, Mankato	Tracy Harris
Onondaga Community College	Nancy Hazzard
UC Santa Barbara	Roberta Gilman
Eastern College	Laurie Schreiner
Miami University	Linda Dixon

Note. Final list of colleges agreeing to participate in this study.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument used to collect data for this study was a guide of semi-structured interview questions developed from the literature review. In order to ensure validity, each question was reviewed for content validity and comprehensibility by a panel of experts.

The purpose of this review was to ensure that the proposed questions would gather the specific characteristics of successful intervention programs (Huck, 1996).

The panel of experts consisted of matriculation administrators, who are members of the Region Eight Committee of Matriculation Coordinators. This group represents matriculation administrators from the 13 community colleges in Orange County, California. The panel of five experts was selected because of its members' understanding of the matriculation process and active involvement in the administration of matriculation in its members' respective colleges. In addition, the ethnic diversity of the panel enabled the researcher to insure each proposed question was critiqued for sensitivity to various ethnic and gender-based populations.

Each member of the panel was contacted by the researcher and informed of the purpose of the study in order to determine their willingness to participate. Panel members were mailed an introductory letter (Appendix A), a copy of the literature review and a rater sheet that listed each question (see Appendix B). The rater sheet enabled panel members to scrutinize proposed question for validity and comprehensibility. The panel of experts determined the content validity of each question. To address comprehensibility, panel members were asked to review the questions for clarity and scope. Proposed questions were structured to ensure each respondent would understand the question in the same manner. Questions also were reviewed for ambiguous or misleading language.

The rater sheet listed each question followed by a Likert scale utilizing a numerical range of one to four. The rating scale asked the experts to determine the validity of each question by selecting a numerical value for the relevancy of each question. Questions that received a rating of three, for relevant, or four, for very relevant,

by at least three of the five panel members were included in the final survey. Next to each question was an area for panel members to provide overall comments regarding the interview questions, inclusive of clarity and scope for each question. Based on the review, minor changes were made to the wording of questions one, three and four and the follow-up question to number one was moved to question three. The content of the proposed questions remained virtually unchanged.

The panel of experts was composed of the following individuals:

David Baird, Ed.D.	Dean, Counseling and Matriculation Officer Golden West College
Arthur Briones	Dean of Counseling Programs and Services Citrus College
Rendell Drew	Dean of Counseling Coastline College
Irene Malmgren	Dean, Counseling Division Rancho Santiago College
Raul Rodriquez	Dean, Counseling and Matriculation Mt. San Antonio College

Based on Isaac's (1995) research text, proposed interview questions were designed with the following framework in mind:

1. Questions were designed to eliminate ambiguity.

2. All interviewees were advised of the purpose of the interview prior to initiating the process.

3. To facilitate the validity of data collection, the researcher insured that the person being interviewed was the individual responsible for the administration of the program.

4. Questions were open-ended and reviewed to insure that they did not lead the respondent to a specific response.

Reliability

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in regard to reliability. Traditionally, reliability has been viewed as the ability to repeat a process and attain the same results. Since qualitative research does not lend itself to exact replication, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the terms "dependability" (p. 288) or "consistency" (p. 288). Merriam (1998) wrote:

> That is, rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense— they are consistent and dependable. The question then, is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected. (p. 206)

Dependability or consistency was also addressed through the utilization of inter-rater reliability.

Data Collection and the Interview Process

The researcher contacted the administrator of each identified program in order to schedule a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview. Prior to the interview, the researcher mailed a copy of the interview questions, found in Appendix C, to each program administrator facilitating the administrator's ability to prepare for the interview.

The interview format was a series of semi-structured interview questions that enabled the researcher to probe and attain in-depth information from a small number of individuals "who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Each interview

was scheduled for 40 minutes. The researcher allowed the interview to run longer if the college representative felt there was additional information that would enhance the results. The interviews were conducted by telephone. Each administrator was asked the same set of questions.

The researcher attained permission to record each interview in order to ascertain accuracy. A back-up tape recorder was available in case there was malfunction of the recording equipment. All tapes were transcribed facilitating completion of the content analysis. In addition to taping, the researcher took notes so if a problem occurred with the equipment, the data would not be lost. The written notes were reviewed and summarized immediately after the interview in order to preserve accuracy of the data.

Once the transcription was complete, a copy was sent to each participant in order to insure accuracy of the transcription. It was determined in advance if any errors occurred, they would be corrected, and the amended transcription would be returned to the program administer for final proofing prior to being used as a source of data. When available, documents including college catalogs, college handbooks and semester class schedules were collected from each school in order to supplement the information collected in the interview.

Interview questions were asked in an open-ended fashion with the desire to attain as much information as possible. Individually scheduled interviews eliminated scheduling difficulties and afforded the opportunity to ask for clarification from each administrator interviewed (Robbin's study, as sited in Craig, 1996). No interview exceeded 40 minutes, as each participant was interviewed during his or her normal work hours, and the

researcher wanted to avoid any concerns generated by conducting the interview for an excessive amount of time.

Interview Guide

1. Please explain the components of the intervention that are in place for students on academic and progress probation?

2. If this is an officially sanctioned program, supported by the entire college, please explain how the college manifests its support for the program. Who actually administers the program? Who provides funding for the program? How are faculty selected to participate in the program?

3. How are students identified to participate in the program? What was the rationale for this decision? Is participation mandatory or voluntary? If mandatory, at what point is program participation required?

4. Does your college address the external factors contributing to college performance, such as level of family support, first generation college student, returning student, study skills and time management? If yes, what external factors are considered, how are they identified and what interventions are implemented for the student? Are there factors that, regardless of student performance, result in students automatically being considered for your intervention program (such factors may include age, disability and ethnicity)?

5. What success strategies do you provide to students placed on academic and/or progress probation? Who provides these strategies to students? How is student compliance monitored? Are there any special benefits

afforded to students who participate? Are there consequences imposed on students who do not participate?

6. What characteristics, if any, are identified early in the enrollment process? Who is responsible for identifying these characteristics, and what are the characteristics the college identifies?

7. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of successful intervention programs? Can these programs be replicated at community colleges?

8. What research is collected to evaluate program effectiveness? Who conducts the research? How is success or failure defined? What success factors do you measure, (e.g., retention, persistence, gpa, units completed)? What have your results indicated?

9. What factors drove the decision to establish an intervention program at your college? Why did you decide to implement the type of intervention program that you have in place?

10. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that may be important to this study that was not covered in the questions asked? If so, please explain.

Data Analysis

Once the data were collected, the researcher reviewed it for specific program characteristics that contribute to student success. Content analysis requires the researcher to read each transcription in its entirety and determine if there are significant motifs among programs (Creswell, 1998). Merriam (1998) wrote:

…analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out

of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said

and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning.

Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between

concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive

reasoning, between description and interpretation. These meanings or

understandings or insights constitute the findings of a study. Findings can be in

the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes or categories that cut across

the data. (p. 178)

Seidman (1991) recommends the development of categories by reviewing the

transcripts without a predetermined goal. One should read the transcripts, mark the areas

that are of interest, determine if there is a category that could be assigned to the passage

and list it in the margin of the transcript. As the reader continues reviewing the transcript,

additional support may be found and information that supports the category may be

discovered. He wrote:

…the process of working with excerpts from participants' interviews, seeking

connections among them, explaining those connections and building interpretative

categories is demanding and involves risks. The danger is that the researcher will

try to force excerpts into categories, and the categories and themes that he or she

already has in mind, rather than let them develop from the experience of the

participants as represented in the interviews. (p. 109)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the development of categories as units. Each

unit should reveal information that is relevant to the study and "should be interpretable in

the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (p. 345).

According to Merriam (1998), "category construction is data analysis" (p. 182). She offers the following guidelines for the development of categories:

1. Categories should reflect the purpose of the research. In other words categories are the answer to your research question.

2. Categories should be exhaustive, that is, you should be able to place all data that you decided were important or relevant to the study in a category or subcategory.

3. Categories should be mutually exclusive. A particular unit of data should fit into only one category. If the exact same unit of data can be placed into more than one category, more conceptual work needs to be done to refine your categories.

4. Categories should be sensitizing. The naming of the category should be as sensitive as possible to what is in the data. An outsider should be able to read the categories and gain some sense of their nature.

5. Categories should be conceptually congruent. This means that the same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level. Conceptual congruence is probably the most difficult criterion to apply. Investigators are usually so immersed in their data and their analysis that it is hard for them to see whether or not a set of categories make sense together. (p. 185)

In order to ensure content validity and decrease concerns of researcher bias, the researcher asked two other professionals to review each transcript independently to establish content validity and determine what themes or motifs emerge. Once these professionals completed their reviews, they met with the researcher to determine what, if any, similar themes were found in their independent reviews. The agreed upon motifs, derived from the consensus of this group, were utilized in the final analysis. This process, called "triangulation," (Merriam, 1998, p. 204) enhanced internal validity by using multiple investigators "to confirm emerging findings" (p. 204).

Upon completion, responses were scrutinized and each answer categorized. Frequency distribution charts were created to offer a visual perspective of the narrative by graphing the distribution of each theme or motif. Information from each college was synthesized. Characteristics of each program were reviewed to determine if there are consistent characteristics among colleges. Once the characteristics were determined, a compendium of best practices for a community college intervention program was proposed.

Motifs were clustered into themes and analyzed (Creswell, 1998). The researcher sought to identify common characteristics, themes and patterns as well as discover new and innovative approaches. In order to encourage candid and honest answers, participating college campuses are not identified in the transcription.

Interview Time Frame

Interviews were conducted over a 3- day time frame during the week of May 9, 2000. In order to identify participants, the researcher reviewed the literature and sent

multiple e-mails to state and national list-serves. The researcher then contacted the

individual responsible for program administration in order to arrange an interview.

Chapter Three

Findings

<u>Data Collection</u>

Through the literature review and e-mail list serve, 17 colleges were initially identified to participate in the interview. The researcher contacted each college administrator to determine if the administrator of the program would participate in an interview. Of the 17 colleges initially identified, 7 did not participate in an interview. Of the 10 remaining colleges, all participated and, as a result of a conversation with 1 of the 10 college administrators, 1 other college was added that had not been previously identified. The total number of interviews completed was 11.

Each of the 11 administrators participating in an interview was sent a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the list of interview questions and a tentative interview schedule. After sending the letters, the researcher contacted each school to arrange a convenient time to conduct the interview. The program administrator determined the time to conduct the interview, and the researcher sent an e-mail message to each administrator confirming the final time agreed upon.

The interviews were conducted over a 3-day time frame. Table 3 provides a summary of the colleges that participated, the person interviewed and the date and time of the interview.

Table 3

Final Interview Time Schedule

College Interviewed	Administrator	Date and Time
Miami University, Ohio	Linda Dixon	5/10/00 6:45 a.m.
Eastern College, PA	Laurie Schreiner	5/10/00 10:00 a.m.
Hartnell College, CA	Lee Smith	5/10/00 11:00 a.m.
Bowling Green, Ohio	Matthew Webb	5/11/00 8:00 a.m.
Onondaga College, NY	Nancy Hazzard	5/11/00 9:00 a.m.
Minnesota State, MN	Tracy Harris	5/11/00 11:00 a.m.
Citrus College, CA	Arthur Briones	5/11/00 1:00 p.m.
	Robin McBurney	
UC Santa Barbara, CA	Roberta Gilman	5/11/00 2:00 p.m.
LA Southwest, CA	Phyllis Braxton	5/11/00 4:00 p.m.
Lake Area Tech, SD	Jeannie Bergh	5/12/00 6:00 a.m.
Kent State, FL	Johanna Maytas	5/12/00 7:00 a.m.

Note. Final schedule of telephone interviews listing contact people and times.

The researcher called each administrator as scheduled reminding him or her that the interview would be recorded for transcription, and, upon completion, a copy of the transcript would be sent for review. In addition, the researcher took notes in case the tape proved difficult to transcribe.

The interview format was a series of 10 semi-structured questions designed to attain in-depth information from each individual interviewed. The questions asked were as follows:

1. Please explain the components of the intervention that are in place for students on academic and progress probation?

2. If this is an officially sanctioned program, supported by the entire college, please explain how the college manifests its support of the program. Who actually administers the program? Who provides funding for the program? How are faculty selected to participate in the program?

3. How are students identified to participate in the program? What was the rationale for this decision? Is participation mandatory or voluntary? If mandatory, at what point is program participation required?

4. Does your college address the external factors contributing to college performance, such as level of family support, first generation college student, returning student, study skills and time management? If yes, what external factors are considered, how are they identified and what interventions are implemented for the student. Are there factors that, regardless of student performance, result in students automatically being considered for your intervention program (such factors may include age, disability and ethnicity)?

5. What success strategies do you provide to students placed on academic and/or progress probation? Who provides these strategies to students? How is student compliance monitored? Are there any special benefits afforded to students who participate? Are there consequences imposed on students who do not participate?

6. What characteristics, if any, are identified early in the enrollment process? Who is responsible for identifying these characteristics, and what are the characteristics the college identifies?

7. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of successful intervention programs? Can these programs be replicated at community colleges?

8. What research is collected to evaluate program effectiveness? Who conducts the research? How is success or failure defined? What success factors do you measure (e.g., retention, persistence, gpa, units completed)? What have your results indicated?

9. What factors drove the decision to establish an intervention program at your college? Why did you decide to implement the type of intervention program that you have in place?

10. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that may be important to this study that was not covered in the questions asked? If so, please explain.

Each interview was scheduled to run 40 minutes, but because of the advanced preparation of the participants, most were completed in 30 minutes. Upon completion of each interview, the researcher reviewed the written notes attained during the interview to ensure accuracy.

After transcribing the tapes, a copy of the written transcript and a release form (Appendix E) were sent to each participant for review. The release form was designed to demonstrate explicit consent as to the purpose of the interviews and that the transcripts may be published.

Mechanics of the Interview

The researcher personally contacted and scheduled interviews with all participants during the week of May 9, 2000. The researcher sent each participant the list of semi-structured interview questions enabling the interviewee to prepare in advance of the taped interview session.
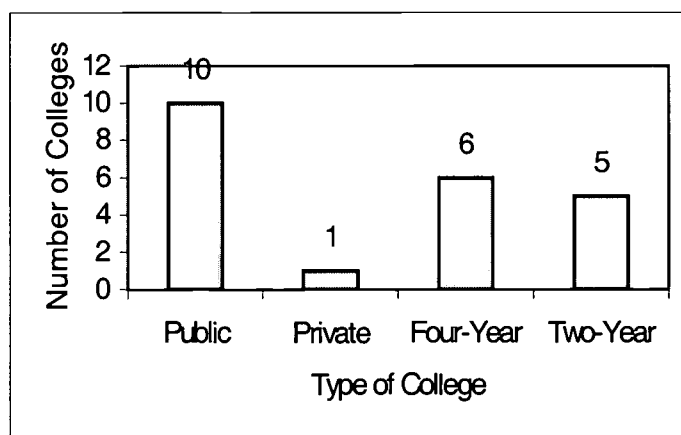
The following demographic information was collected for each college: 2-year or 4-year college, private or publicly funded college and typical annual enrollment. Figure 1 displays the type of colleges included in this study, and Figure 2 shows enrollment trends for each college.

Figure 1. Profile of the colleges participating in this study.
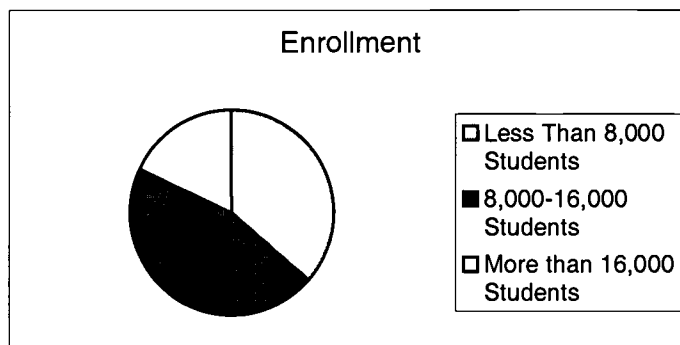
Figure 2. Enrollment numbers for each college represented in this study.

All interviews were conducted by phone, and each interview was tape recorded and transcribed. Each person interviewed was made aware of the intent of the study and advised that the interview would be recorded for later transcription. In preparation for the interview, the college representative was sent the list of questions. Of the 11 colleges interviewed, 10 received the questions in advance of the interview. The researcher asked the interviewee, at the one college which did not receive the questions in advance, if she would prefer to be interviewed at another time. She indicated she would prefer to do the interview as scheduled.

Once each interview was transcribed, the researcher sent a copy of the transcription and a release form (Appendix E) to the program administrator. This enabled the program administrator to proof the transcript for factual errors. Although there were no factual errors, some colleges requested editing for grammar and punctuation.

In appreciation of the time given by each college representative, each participant will be sent the study's findings section as a way of thanking them for their time.

Data Analysis

After the data were collected the researcher hired a professional to transcribe each tape. Because of the soft vocal tone of the participant from Miami University, the researcher needed to use the notes attained during the interview to supplement sections of the tape recording. In order to facilitate honest answers, the transcriptions of participating colleges were coded in a manner so as not to disclose the identity of the college.

In order to ensure inter-rater reliability and decrease concerns of researcher bias, the researcher asked two outside professionals to review each transcript independently to determine what themes or motifs emerged. Once the professionals completed their reviews, they sent their results to the researcher to determine what, if any, similar themes emerged from their independent reviews. Motifs, derived from the consensus of this group, were utilized in the final analysis. This process, called inter-rater reliability, enhanced internal validity of the motifs by using multiple investigators to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 1998). Statements related to each of the 10 questions were extracted from the transcripts, and a database was developed.

In order to demonstrate inter-rater reliability and provide a quantitative summary, the following table was developed. Responses for each question were categorized, and the number of responses determined by each reader is listed.

Table 4

Inter-rater Reliability

Question Number	Total Number of Categorized Responses	Category Determined by Three Reviewers	Category Determined by Two Reviewers	Category Determined by One Reviewer
1	7	4	2	1
2	4	2	1	1
3	5	3	1	1
4	6	4	1	1
5	6	4	1	1
6	6	3	2	1
7	7	2	4	1
8	4	4	0	0
9	4	4	0	0
Total	49	30	12	7
Percentage		61%	25%	14%

Note. Table demonstrates category agreement between the researcher and the independent reviewers.

As indicated in Table 4, questions 1 through 9 were categorized into 49 different response categories. Question 10 was not categorized, as the respondents summarized the answers provided in questions 1 through 9.

The total number of responses for each individual question was listed, followed by the number of times the independent reviewers agreed on the category. For example, in question one, the responses were broken into seven distinct categories. The number of

times all three reviewers listed the category is four, the number of times at least two reviewers determined a category is two and the number of times only one reviewer listed a category is one. As indicated in the table, the independent raters were in full agreement 61% of the time, and at least two of the raters determined the same response 25% of the time. The combined total, of having at least two raters determine a category, accounts for 86% of the categories developed. Single responses were indicated in 14% of the questions.

The following tables offer specific breakdowns for each question.

Table 5

Question One Components of Intervention

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Consequences Imposed	3
Send Letters	3
Structured/Use Contracts	3
Counseling	3
Offer Course	2
Students Self Assess	2
Early Alert Program Utilized	1

Note. Characteristics of existing intervention programs.

Table 6

Question Two Administration and Support of the Program

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Officially Sanctioned	3
Run by Counselors/Student Affairs	3
Use Graduate Students	2
Desire to Interact with Students	1

Note. Intervention programs are officially sanctioned programs run primarily through Student Service Departments.

Table 7

Question Three How Students are Identified to Participate

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Mandatory Participation	3
Intervene at Some Point	3
GPA below a 2.0	3
Place Holds	2
Look at High School Performance	1

Note. How students are identified to participate in the program and the role of mandatory intervention.

Table 8

Question Four External Factors of Success

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Financial Situation	3
Study Skills	3
Special Population	3
Family Support	3
Identify High-Risk Groups	2
Personal Issues	1

Note. External factors considered when determining student success factors.

Table 9

Question Five Success Strategies Provided to Students

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Counseling	3
Contracts	3
Study Skills	3
Tutoring	3
Monitor Progress/Determine Skill Level	2
Repeat Classes	1

Note. Types of success strategies provided to students on probation.

Table 10

Question Six Characteristics Identified Early in the Enrollment Process

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Special Population	3
High School Performance	3
Need for Basic Skills	3
Undecided Major	2
Selective Admission/Prescreen for Risk	2
Work Commitment	1

Note. Characteristics identified early in the enrollment process.

Table 11

Question Seven Characteristics of Successful Programs

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Prescriptive	3
Counselors Who Care	3
Residential Component	2
1 on 1 Attention/Monitoring	2
Early Identification	2
Tutoring	2
Refer to Resources	1

Note. Characteristics of successful intervention programs.

Table 12

Question Eight Research Used to Determine Program Effectiveness

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Retention Rates	3
5-Year Graduation Rates	3
Student Evaluations	3
None	3

Note. Types of research collected to determine program effectiveness.

Table 13

Question Nine Rationale for Program Implementation

Category	Number of Responses by Independent Reviewers
Concern for Students	3
Site Visit	3
Endowment	3
Retention	3

Note. Factors that drove the decision to initiate an intervention program.

The following addresses how the data relates to each of the respective interview questions. Responses to question one are listed in Table 14.

Interview question one. Please explain the components of the intervention program that are in place for students on academic and progress probation.

Table 14

Responses to Question One

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Contract	Behavioral Contract	Structured
Block Registration	Limit Course Enrollment	Conditional Enrollment
Offer a Course	Students Self-Assess	Early Alert Program
Send Letter	Send Letter	Send Letters
Counseling	Counseling	Individual Counseling

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question one.

Several themes emerged from this question. The first emphasized the need for a structured program. The colleges interviewed address this in various manners. College B accepts a cohort of conditionally admitted students each fall. This group enters the college because they appear motivated to attend. The college looks at each student's SAT score and high school placement or ranking. This cohort of students would not be admitted under the more competitive process. Each student is interviewed, and those showing the most motivation are invited to attend a 3-week residential program. This program starts prior to the regular semester and is described as *an academic boot camp.* The focus of the academic boot camp is to assist students with the development of basic English, math and critical-thinking skills.

There was consistency among all of the colleges in terms of the criteria used to designate a probationary student. Students, who fall below a 2.0 grade-point average on a 0.0-4.0 grade-point average scale, are subject to probation. Colleges are more lenient with first-semester freshmen realizing there is a period of adjustment for first-semester

students. The colleges will either alert the student to academic status by a letter or impose some type of mandatory consequence, usually individual or group counseling. In order to facilitate the utilization of campus resources and address persistence, College C denies access to subsequent semester registration until the student sees a counselor.

> We introduced blocking on the computer system for students on probation so that they would not be able to register without going through our probation intervention program.... ...and then we go through with every student, one on one, and do an educational plan. They cannot leave without an educational plan. It can be for one semester, it could be four semesters, but then we become very prescriptive.

College I sends a letter to each students saying, "please come in because you're on probation and there's a hold on your record and we want to offer you support services."

Behavioral contracting is utilized by 45% of the colleges with the belief that students on probation need immediate and structured intervention. Students on probation comprise the cohort of students who most need intervention and assistance but also comprise the group least likely to seek out resources.

Popular among 4-year colleges are mandatory college orientation courses students take during their first semester. Community colleges do not have the ability to mandate participation in an orientation course but may suggest participation strongly. Through the matriculation mandates, California Community Colleges receive money to conduct orientation and advisement sessions. Community colleges are given matriculation funds based on the number of students seeking an academic goal. As a result, colleges cannot

develop classes and collect headcount for services they are already being paid to provide through matriculation funding.

Research, completed by John Gardner (1998) suggests students who are involved in college success courses persist at higher rates when compared to students who do not participate in such courses. The Noel & Levitz Group (1998) demonstrates that students who complete mandatory course are more likely to meet with academic success and maintain higher rates of persistence when compared to students who do not participate in college orientation courses.

Regardless of whether the student is involved in intervention through individual or group counseling or a prescribed college course, colleges find the need to focus on basic skills. As College E explains;

> They (counselors) handle basic time management, the importance of involvement in the campus community; they do work on basic academic skills such as test taking and note taking.... ...things that fall under the category of basic academic success.

College K developed a program designed to help students establish learning priorities. The college noticed the high number of students on academic probation who were not coming in to seek assistance. First developed as a workshop, the program has evolved into an afternoon seminar. Students are required to attend and are provided information pertaining to campus resources and college policies addressing academic probation and dismissal. Students also are given guidelines for college success. Students who fail to participate are blocked from registration.

Figure 3 demonstrates the most common components of intervention used by the colleges involved in this study.
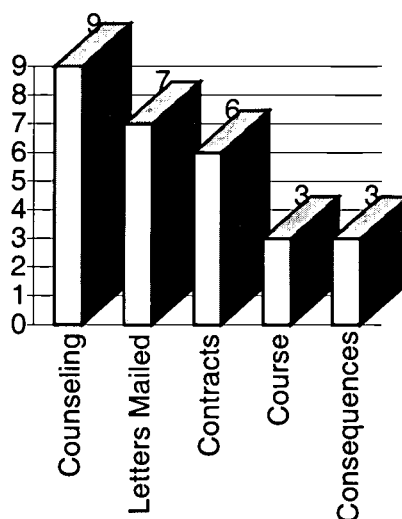

Figure 3. Components of intervention utilized by the colleges in this study.

Interview question two. If this is an officially sanctioned program, supported by the entire college, please explain how the college manifests its support of the program. Who actually administers the program? Who provides funding for the program? How are faculty selected to participate in the program?

Table 15

Responses to Question Two

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Officially Sanctioned	Officially Sanctioned	Officially Sanctioned
Counselors	Counselors	Part of Counseling Load
Desire to Interact with Students	Part of Job Requirements	Run by Student Affairs/Counseling
	Graduate Students	Use Graduate Students

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question two.

All of the administrators interviewed stated the intervention program was sanctioned by the entire college and was part of the college budget. Program administrators were not required to pursue grants or other outside funding, as it is believed that the inconsistency of this type of funding would impact the overall consistency and success of the program.

Colleges with graduate programs use graduate assistants to run the program. The graduate students are supervised by a faculty mentor but are ultimately responsible for administering the program. The graduate students are actively involved in mentoring the probationary students, monitoring progress and lecturing in classes and various workshops. College E stated, "funding just hasn't been an issue because we've got it built into the grad students' job descriptions."

Colleges without graduate programs state program administration is done by counseling or faculty advisors, and, although one college pays overtime to the faculty involved, the remaining colleges consider intervention to be part of the counselors' regular assignment.

Colleges shared the need to have funding and support by the entire college, and all those interviewed emphasized the need to have the program under the direction of the Student Affairs or Counseling department. The primary rationale for this was the need for the program administrator, and the faculty involved, to have the necessary skills to view the student holistically. Once problems are identified, the administrator can develop an effective plan to help the student implement necessary changes.

A synopsis of program administration and sanction status is offered in Figure 4.
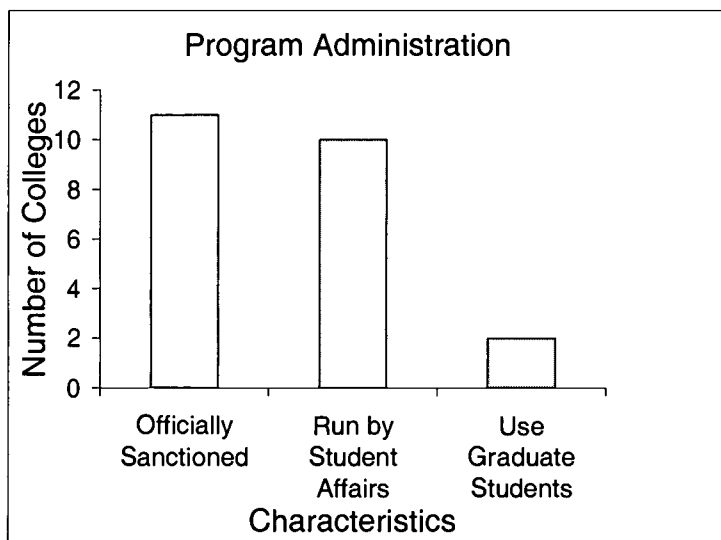
Figure 4. The offices responsible for the administration of the intervention program.

Interview question three. How are students identified to participate in the program? What was the rationale for this decision? Is participation mandatory or voluntary? If mandatory, at what point is program participation required?

Table 16

Responses to Question Three

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Intervene After Grades Are Posted	Fall Grades	Intervene After First Semester on Probation
Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Place Holds	High School Performance	Restrictions/ Holds on Registration
Grade Point Average Below a 2.0 on a 4.0 Scale	Grade Point Average Below a 2.0 on a 4.0 Scale	Grade Point Average Below a 2.0 on a 4.0 Scale

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question three.

Of the 11 colleges 8, or 73%, have mandatory participation at some point in the process. Only one college does not mandate participation at any point, while the two remaining colleges lead students to believe it is mandatory despite having no written policy enforcing participation at either college.

In all of the colleges, students are identified to participate based on a cumulative grade-point average below a 2.0, and students can be disqualified eventually if their cumulative grade-point average does not exceed a 2.0. The point at which this penalty is initiated varies among the colleges. While College B initiates a proactive strategy prior to enrollment, seeking to identify at-risk students prior to entrance, the majority of colleges wait for the results of first-semester grades. Because of open enrollment mandates, community college have the least leverage and dismiss students only after the student has experienced several contiguous semesters of deficient academic performance.

College K mandates participation only if a student is seeking reinstatement after being dismissed for poor academic performance. The primary purpose of participation at the returning point is to determine what has changed in the student's life that will lead to academic success.

> ...are they really ready to come back, is this an indication that they have too many other commitments, that they should really think about it. I had two students...who just decided that this spring was not going to work for them, that they really needed to sit back and take a look at what they were doing and get their lives back together.

Figure 5 shows the type of participation imposed among the colleges interviewed.
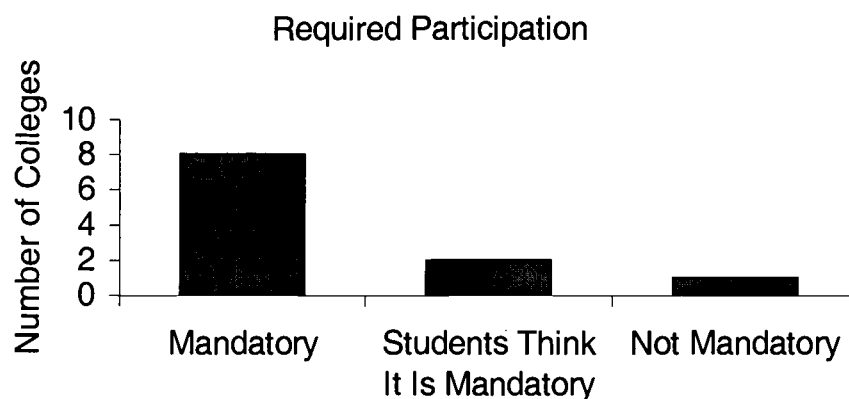
Required Participation

Figure 5. The role of mandatory participation among the college intervention programs.

Interview question four. Does your college address the external factors contributing to college performance, such as level of family support, first generation college student, returning student, study skills and time management? If yes, what external factors are considered, how are they identified and what interventions are implemented for the student? Are there factors that, regardless of student performance, result in students automatically being considered for your intervention program? Such factors may include age, disability and ethnicity.

Table 17

Responses to Question Four

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Financial Situation	Financial Situation	Financial Situation
Study Habits	Study Skills	Study Skills
First-Generation Student	Special Population	First-Generation Student
Family Support	Family Support	Family Support
		(table continues)

Two of the colleges interviewed profile and intervene with high-risk students prior to start of the fall semester. This intervention is based solely on previous academic performance and college readiness assessments. The remaining colleges wait until the student has shown at least one semester with academic deficiency before initiating contact.

College K has one center that gives consideration to special populations. In regard to students with disabilities, when they come in, if they identify themselves as a student with a disability and register with Student Disability Services, they are entitled to reasonable accommodations for exams, classroom, things like that. It also guarantees that if they want to use the services of the Academic Success Center for tutoring, they get one of the top priorities. The Academic Success Center provides tutorial services for undergraduate students, primarily freshman and sophomore level classes, including English, math and major liberal education requirement courses.

There is agreement that each student has unique needs, and the only way to identify these needs is through some type of individual assessment or interview. This also justifies the decision to have intervention programs housed primarily through Student Affairs or Student Services, as this is the area with counseling and advisement expertise.

Since students present colleges with diverse needs, each college emphasized the need to view each student as an individual. Even highly structured programs tailor the type of prescriptive advice given in order to provide personalized advice for each student.

Although there were 15 external components that appear to impact success, there are 3 external components that were identified by more than one college. Figure 6

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Disadvantaged Population	Personal Issues	Identify At-Risk Groups

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question four.

All of the colleges evaluate the extent to which external obligations or responsibilities are impacting student success. College D recently hired a family therapist to assist students with personal issues. All of the colleges have internal resources including tutorial centers, skill development and career selection assessments. Only two of the colleges indicated referral to outside community resources. Although the emphasis is on academic achievement, the colleges realize the need to view the student from a holistic perspective.

In determining the diverse needs of the students, Table 18 provides information as to the types of external factors a counselor should consider when addressing external variables of success.

Table 18

External Variables Impacting Success

Level of Family Support	Disadvantaged Background	Personal Motivation
Social Integration	Time-Management Skills	Requires Special Services
Financial Situation	Outside Obligations	Enjoys Reading
Prior High School	Study Skills/Habits	Self-Reliant
Prior Academic Record	Economically Disadvantaged	Attitude Toward School

Note. Various external components counselors should consider when working with students on probation.

provides a breakdown of the 3 most commonly addressed external variables as well as the number of colleges that specifically mentioned the identified variable.
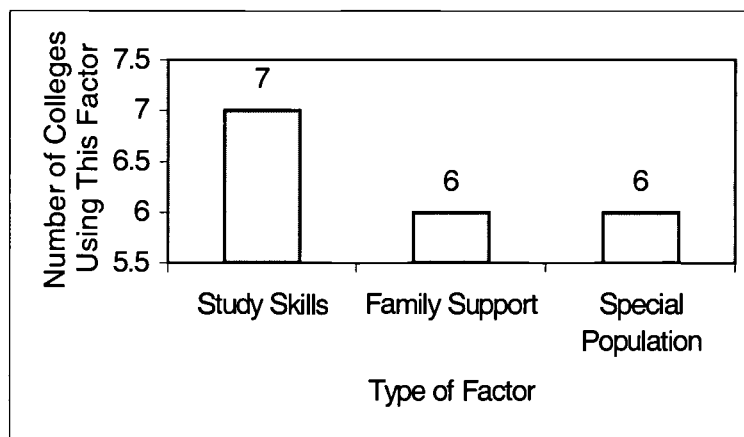

Figure 6. External factors of success and the number of colleges using them.

Interview question five. What success strategies do you provide to students placed on academic and/or progress probation? Who provides these strategies to students? How is student compliance monitored? Are there any special benefits afforded to students who participate? Are there consequences imposed on students who do not participate?

Table 19

Responses to Question Five

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Counseling and Referral	Counseling and Referral	Counseling and Referral
Contracts	Contracts	Behavioral Contracts
Monitoring Progress	Appropriate Course Level	Repeat Classes
Study Skills	Study Skills	Study Skills
Tutoring	Tutoring	Tutoring

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question five.

At 10 of the colleges, success strategies are provided to students under the direction of counseling faculty and student affairs personnel. One college utilizes faculty advisors who have demonstrated an interest in student retention. In all of the colleges, students meet with a variety of college representatives including advisors, faculty, college mentors, graduate students and peer mentors to discuss the factors that led to probationary status. Together they seek to identify resources and solutions to the student's academic dilemma. College H explains the diverse needs of this population.

> We talk to them and try to figure out what the issue was that caused the problem in any individual course. Then we identify the kinds of strategies that would be most appropriate. For some students it's time management. For other students it's improving their writing skills or their math skills...for some it's just taking advantage of the services and for some they're just taking the wrong kinds of courses. We try individual strategies, we're just problem solving staff.

For some students, course repetition will change the cumulative grade calculation and assist the student in attaining good academic standing. Other students need to identify areas of weakness and develop strategies to overcome their academic liability. Time management, poor writing skills, limited reading comprehension and poor study habits are areas where behavioral contracting and prescriptive intervention become evident.

Students struggling with personal issues, including personal relationships, family, financial constraints and outside obligations, may need to decrease their course load in order to attain good academic standing. Professional counselors, who have the skills to assist students with a myriad of transitional issues, address personal crisis.

Colleges provide resources to students. The most prevalent resources include referral to tutorial, writing and assessment centers where students can learn and practice the skills required for college success. In order to facilitate use of resources centers, eight colleges mandate attendance and participation; students who do not participate are blocked from registering for subsequent semesters. As a result, students who otherwise would not access these resources are benefiting from the services each center provides.

Contracting is a practice that directs the students to resources and provides a visual reminder to what the student has agreed. Colleges vary in the degree of enforcement used when contracting. College B says, "the expectation is their behavioral contract, and we lay that out (when) they meet with their advisor and their peer counselor and their tutor each week. They're out of the program if they don't."

College F supports the need for individual contact, "I think the characteristics that help overall would be individualized contact with students, …continuous contact with students, and monitoring…usually these kids just need a little help and sometimes just a nudge". The idea that someone is interested and cares is important in attracting and maintaining student participation in the program.

Colleges differ in the variety of services and referrals that are made, but, for nine of the colleges interviewed, students are required to meet with counselors in order to facilitate individualized evaluation and referral.

Interview question six. What characteristics, if any, are identified early in the enrollment process? Who is responsible for identifying these characteristics, and what are the characteristics the college identifies?

Table 20

Responses to Question Six

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Disadvantaged Background	Disadvantaged	Selective at Admission
Risk Factor Assessment	Special Population	Pre-admission Assessment
First-Generation Student	Ethnicity	First-Generation Student
High School Performance	High School Performance	High School Performance
Students Requiring Basic Skill Development	Students Requiring Basic Skill Development	Students Requiring Basic Skill Development
Work Commitments	Undecided Major	Undecided/Undeclared Majors

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question six.

A significant line became evident when reviewing the responses for this question. The colleges with highly selective admission criteria screened students who they felt exhibited success prior to offering admission status. Students who found themselves on probation at these competitive colleges realized they would be asked to leave if their grades did not improve. The competitive colleges wait until the end of the first semester, after grades are posted, to provide intervention. Support staff runs a report to identify those students who fell below the probationary grade line. A letter is sent notifying the students who fall below the predetermined grade level that they may benefit from academic intervention.

College K developed a program for all undeclared majors. The college believes that students, without an academic discipline, are more likely to wander through courses thereby impacting their ability to succeed. College B developed an *academic boot camp,*

which serves as a bridge for students who are highly motivated but exhibit lower academic performance. College C stressed the need to look at basic skills.

> They (counselors) have a list of questions to ask students when they are registering for classes or whenever we meet with them. It's really important with probationary students to go back and ask them about their English and math. So many of them have gotten themselves on probation because they try to take transferable courses, or more advanced courses, or they didn't have the maturity to realize for every hour in class it's two or three hours (of out-of-class study) for them. So we've seen a pattern—usually they take too many classes, perhaps too advanced for them in terms of their skill level, did not seek help through counselors, tutors, etc.

For first-semester students, there is support for early orientation and advisement, as problems addressed early may prevent subsequent semesters of poor academic standing. This also impacts persistence, as students who see themselves as unsuccessful or incapable often self-select out of college.

All of the colleges voiced the need for students to be seen by a counselor and evaluated. For some students, academic difficulty during the first semester revolves around issues of personal responsibility and adjustment to the college milieu. For other students, particularly those attending open enrollment campuses, a lack of basic skills, specific to English and reading, inhibits their ability to meet the academic rigor expected on a college campus. Without appropriate intervention, assessment and placement, this group of students is least likely to meet with success, as they have difficulty comprehending the information presented and struggle with outside assignments.

Campus outreach efforts should explain college expectations are different from high school. The need for independent study time, with the average being two additional weekly hours for every hour spent in the classroom, the need to manage time, balance responsibilities and assume personal responsibility for academic success can overwhelm under-prepared students. Figure 7 demonstrates the characteristics that, if identified prior to admission or early in the first semester, could lead to success if proper intervention strategies and support services are provided. The numerical value represents the percentage of colleges in this study addressing each issue.
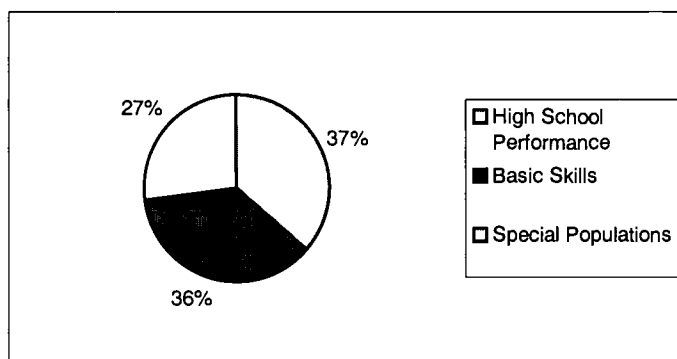

Figure 7. Types of characteristics identified early in the enrollment process.

Interview question seven. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of successful intervention programs? Can these programs be replicated at community colleges?

Table 21

Responses to Question Seven

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Residential	Residential	Referral to Resources
Tutoring/Peer Advising	Tutoring	Individual Attention
Weekly Meetings	Follow Up	Ongoing Monitoring
Counselors Who Care	Compassionate Counselors	Counselors Who Care
Early Identification	Individual Contact	Early Identification
Prescriptive	Prescriptive	Prescriptive

Note. Combined responses of the researcher and independent reviewers to question seven.

The need for individual attention and progress monitoring was consistent among colleges. All of the colleges provide some individual intervention as part of their comprehensive program. As College F explained:

I think one of the characteristics of a successful program would be some kind of one-to-one contact with the student and an advisor or professor or peer mentor or peer advisor. The reason being is that sometimes students need extra attention— special attention—that they feel someone's paying attention to what their progress is.

College F further explained the importance of campus resources and the funds to staff tutoring and college career centers. As this college pointed out, if a counselor makes a referral to a support resource on the campus and the support service cannot handle the load, the student seeking assistance attains no benefit. As evidenced in question two, colleges with successful intervention programs demonstrate an ongoing institutional commitment to the services provided and an inherent belief in the need to assist students.

The selection of faculty and staff assigned to work with probationary students must be made carefully. The individuals interacting with the students must be comfortable with diversity. Diversity encompasses variation among students but also the diverse types of problems a student may present. One college student may need assistance with study skills while another may be experiencing severe difficulty caused by a lack of family support, difficulty with social integration or some type of emotional or personal crisis. College C states, "Counselors have to feel comfortable with diversity, diverse students. They have to be compassionate, but they also have to be willing to be prescriptive." Prescriptive counseling is the ability to tell a student what specifically needs to be done. It is an issue debated among counselors, many who have been trained to empower students to make their own decisions and, therefore, view a prescriptive approach as violating a student's rights.

College J stated that early identification of students and consistency among the professionals administering the program are two of the most important aspects. "The student has to consistently try to achieve the goals we've set up and consistently do what's been prescribed for them."

Among all of the colleges, there is a shared belief in the need to reach out to this population and make this cohort of students aware of the benefits of working with individuals who can provide choices and assistance. It is optimal if the individuals assigned to working with at-risk students have an interest in the population. Students are perceptive and will ascertain quickly if the individual working with them is genuine and caring.

Colleges with residential programs boast of the benefits of offering intervention in a very structured and planned environment. It is realized that few community college students have access to dormitory or residential living facilities. Aside from the residential component, all of the college representatives felt their programs could be replicated at a community college. Figure 8 demonstrates the most common characteristics of successful intervention programs and the percentage of colleges utilizing each approach.
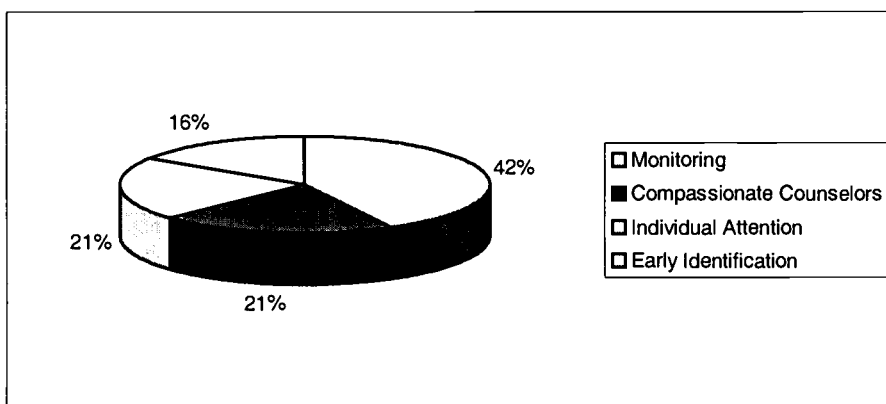

Figure 8. Characteristics of successful intervention programs.

Interview question eight. What research is collected to evaluate program effectiveness? What success factors do you measure (e.g., retention, persistence, gpa, units completed)? What have your results indicated?

Table 22

Responses to Question Eight

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Retention rates	Retention Rates	Retention rates
5-Year Graduation Rates	5-Year Graduation Rates	5-Year Graduation Rates
Student Evaluations	Student Evaluations	Student Evaluations
None	None	None

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question eight.

Eight colleges do some type of research, but the range of research conducted

varies from self-assessment, anecdotal comments and observations to comprehensive

quantitative data collection and analysis. The program administrator conducts most of the

research and utilizes results for program enhancement.

Those with quantifiable data monitor 5-year graduation rates, the number of

semester units the student actually completes and student evaluations of the program. The

use of program evaluations, which are completed by students participating in the

program, provides administrators with practical suggestions and critiques. College E

shared its students' comments.

"The course taught me what to expect and how to deal with things I'm having

trouble with."

"This class has opened my eyes to see the appropriate way to study and has made

me aware that I can accomplish my goals."

"My study skills were really awful and now I feel more confident in studying."

"It kept me on track and caused me to focus on how important it was to earn better grades."

I liked "the instructors enthusiasm and their willingness to help students."

I liked "the discussions because they let me know that other kids were going through the same stuff."

With limited research, programs appear driven by an affective desire to assist student to success. The pioneers of each program professed a self-declared and personal desire to help students who are in academic jeopardy.

Interview question nine. What factors drove the decision to establish an intervention program at your college? Why did you decide to implement the type of intervention program that you have in place?

Table 23

Responses to Question Nine

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Commitment to Social Justice	Concern for Students	Desire to Serve Students
Site Visit	Site Visit	Mandated by a Site Visit
Endowment	Endowment	Endowment
Retention	Retention Statistics	Increase Retention

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question nine.

Accreditation and the institution of matriculation programs throughout the community college system in California have had an impact on the development of probation intervention programs. All of the community colleges interviewed discussed the concept of the matriculated student, and College I developed a program based on a

site visit recommendation. College B received an endowment, when the local vocational college closed down. The college was approached with the idea of working with the students from the vocational college who probably would not be accepted to the 4-year college.

The remaining nine colleges, 82%, offered a sincere desire to work with students who were struggling. The vision for the program appeared to have come from the individual interviewed, based on a grassroots desire to provide assistance to students who appeared to need information and resources. College J still receives vocational education money from the Carl Perkins Program and ties success to the attainment of financial aid, but it stressed its primary motive for program development was student success.
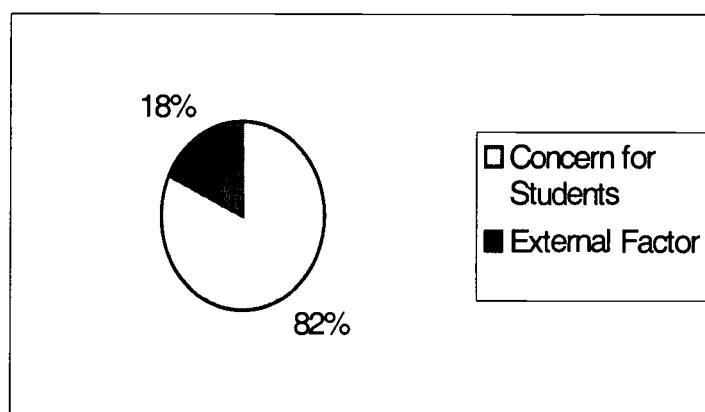

Figure 9. Rationale provided for the institutionalization of a probation intervention program.

Interview question ten. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that may be important to this study that was not covered in the questions asked? If so, please explain.

Table 24

Responses to Question Ten

Independent Reviewer A	Independent Reviewer B	Researcher
Good Faculty:Student Ratio	Follow Up	Good Faculty:Student Ratio
Follow Up/Tracking	Evaluation is Important	Sincere Interest
Mandatory	Make it Required	Mandatory
High Visibility		Joint Effort
Administrative Support		Administrative Support

Note. Combined responses of researcher and independent reviewers to question ten.

This last question elicited a summary of the interview enabling each administrator to offer a final opinion. One point stressed was the need to choose participating faculty wisely. The individuals who are working with students on probation need to have a passion for the work they are performing. Fiscal and human resources are required to make the programs successful. College J stated:

> ...one of the keys at our institution is that it is small, and generally programs don't exceed thirty students per year. We have a really good faculty-to-student ratio. We have a pretty sincere faculty...and of course, the administration is very supportive of any retention. We have autonomy and, thus far, the dollars to do some of the things that need to be done.

Each student needs to be evaluated on an individual basis, and program success will be based on the degree to which the program is integrated throughout the campus. College F points out:

...there are always bugs that need to be worked out of probationary processes. None of them are 100%, none of them are foolproof, none of them are going to do exactly what you want them to do, and I think that is why there's always a need for evaluating the process...that's the way you continue to improve your program.

College C commented on the changing attitudes of college students.

"I can remember getting a letter on probation and boy, if you got anything from the college, you were in there the next day to take care of it."

Colleges agree on the need to motivate students to access services. Students on probation need structure and benefit from a direct and prescriptive approach. Monitoring and follow-up facilitate student success by fostering relationships with professionals who can assist students as academic problems arise rather than waiting for negative consequences to occur.

Chapter Four

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

<u>Summary of the Methodology</u>

This study was developed to determine the characteristics of effective intervention

programs for students on probation. The study began by reviewing the literature to

examine the theoretical foundations proposed by retention experts and to uncover the

characteristics of existing practices among colleges. Although the researcher is primarily

interested in discovering characteristics that can be applied to community colleges, 6 of

the 11 colleges involved in this study were 4-year colleges. Because of the competitive

nature of 4-year colleges and the need to insure fiscal solvency, probation intervention

programs were conceived at colleges offering baccalaureate degree programs, making it

necessary to interview representatives at 4-year colleges.

Through the literature review and various retention newsgroups, the researcher

identified 17 colleges with probation intervention programs. The colleges chosen

represented 2-year and 4-year colleges, public and private colleges and colleges that

ranged from small to large based on enrollment numbers. The researcher conducted all of

the interviews. All interviews were taped and transcribed. The researcher, along with two

outside professionals, reviewed and coded each transcription. Themes or motifs were

developed based on the independent analysis of the researcher and the outside

professionals. This independent review provided inter-rater reliability for the conclusions

presented in this paper.

This was a descriptive study in which the researcher sought the answer to one

research question: What are the characteristics of an intervention program that will help

California community colleges initiate probation intervention programs and impact student persistence positively? Based on the literature survey, a semi-structured interview tool was constructed. A diverse panel of experts reviewed the questionnaire for comprehensibility and bias.

Interviews were conducted using the semi-structured questionnaire. Each interview took 25to 40 minutes. The interview was schedule at the convenience of the program administrator. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. All transcriptions were sent to the program administrator to ensure accuracy.

Data were coded and themes were developed based on the analysis of the researcher and the two independent professionals. Quotes supporting each theme are presented in the data analysis section of this study.

Summary of the Findings

In addition to the analysis centered on the semi-structured interview questions, it was important to determine the themes evidenced throughout the interview. The following themes are based on the motifs that became evident through the inter-rater reader process and the literature review. The themes are presented in a manner reflecting the order in which the questions were asked. There is, therefore, no significance attached to the order of presentation.

Notification and contact. Students on probation need to be made aware of their academic status and the services that are available to assist them. Probationary students benefit from being viewed holistically, as many of the problems impacting their success exist outside of the classroom. Personal issues including family obligations, outside relationships, finances and college readiness are not likely to be viewed by the student as

obstacles to success until the student experiences academic difficulties. Even at this point, the student may not associate outside influences with classroom performance.

This conclusion was supported in the literature by Hallberg (1997). He developed an inventory, entitled the College Success Factors Inventory, which identifies the external variables impacting student success. His assessment can be administered to students at the time of admission, facilitating the utilization of campus support services.

Randi Levitz (1998) breaks these external variables into 5 distinct categories, one of which is under the direct control of the college. Her research also asserts the need to view the student from a holistic perspective. She professes the need to work with students on the issues impacting success as well as the need for the college to study issues related to course availability and faculty selection.

Administrative and fiscal support. Colleges with successful intervention programs have integrated the cost of the program into the general college budget. The program is run through the Student Affairs or Counseling offices, as this is where counseling expertise is located. Counselors are not responsible for seeking outside funding because of the financial commitment made by the college. Program administrators are responsible for daily operation and program development, but the intervention program is supported and utilized by the entire campus community.

Lana Low (1998) asserts campus retention is a campus issue. Responsibility for success cannot lie within one area or campus department. Low outlines 6 specific steps, each college must take, in order to insure program success. The first step is assessing campus readiness. This begins with a shared understanding of common goals among key

constituents. A high level of commitment combined with campus involvement will give rise to improved retention.

Mandatory participation. All the campuses interviewed support the need for intrusive, prescriptive and mandatory participation. While colleges differ in selecting the point at which the program should become mandatory, consensus demonstrates that the earlier a student is involved in an intervention program the more likely the student is to meet with academic success.

Earl (1987) stated the need to impose intervention as a recommendation in his dissertation over a decade ago. He found the students most in need of services are the least likely to seek support. Likewise, Randi Levitz (1998) supports intrusive strategies and stresses that proactive approaches must be used to reach freshmen before the students have the opportunity to experience feels of failure, disappointment and confusion.

Early intervention. Competitive colleges attempt to screen out those students who are not likely to meet the academic rigor posed by the college. The review of high school transcripts provides the college with an initial appraisal of students' likelihood of meeting with academic success. The utilization of early alert programs enables colleges to warn students of academic deficiency, thereby facilitating the use of campus resources. Colleges that prescreen students will not only look at previous high school records but also review factors such as undecided major, first generation college student or special population, students with disabilities and/or students requiring assistance with basic skill development.

The literature review supported this conclusion. Eastern College in Pennsylvania focuses on the individual needs of each student. At risk students are identified upon

entrance and individualized success plans are developed. (Schreiner, 1998). Edward Anderson and Bill McGuire (1998) remind educators that students most in need of services are least likely to seek assistance. We must bring the intervention program to the students. Early intervention facilitates persistence by providing success strategies that can positively impact student early in the academic endeavor.

External factors. Every college agreed there is a need to view the entire student. When students are struggling with academic and personal problems, the student will focus on the external problems, resulting in poor academic performance. External factors include, but are not limited to, finances, relationships, family problems, adjustment and socialization issues, personal responsibility and basic college readiness skills, such as study strategies, time management, writing and reading comprehension skills.

Success strategies. Individual counseling is the primary mode in which college success strategies are delivered to students. In order to encourage compliance, colleges use behavioral contracts to provide written reinforcement to the counseling session. Students who fail to comply may meet with consequences, such as unit limit holds, registration holds or disqualification from college attendance.

The primary purpose of imposing consequences is to ensure students needing assistance attain assistance. It is asserted that the motivational level of probationary students is limited and requires early, intrusive and prescriptive intervention.

Some students must repeat classes in order to increase their grade-point average, others require assessment in order to uncover problems not easily identified or shared. Examples of these problems include basic skill development or issues revolving around college readiness. All colleges provide campus resources, such as free tutorial programs

and assessment centers. This enables the counselor to provide appropriate referral specific to student needs.

The literature review supported the success characteristics evidenced through the interview process. The success strategies mentioned in the literature review include: mandatory program participation, participation in freshman seminars and orientation classes, utilization of counselors specially trained to view the student holistically, referral to campus and community resources and consequences for academic performance below a 2.0 grade point average.

Characteristics of successful programs. Whether the student is a residential or commuter student, the need for individual attention and ongoing monitoring were viewed as critical. The personality and concern demonstrated by the program administrator, faculty and staff also were seen as important. Students requiring assistance from the intervention program need to feel heard and understood. Compassion displayed by those involved with the student reinforces a genuine concern that students respond to positively. Once a rapport is developed, counselors find it easier to make referrals and monitor progress. The ability to refer the student to campus resources increases the likelihood of the student seeking assistance, especially if the centers are located on campus making them convenient and easily accessible.

Research. In order to demonstrate effectiveness and measurable results, the colleges agreed there is a need for ongoing research. This, however, is the area showing the greatest deficiency. Although participants felt the programs they provided were effective, few had quantifiable data demonstrating success. The greatest longitudinal data had been collected throughout a last 5-year time frame.

Conclusions

This study was designed to determine the characteristics of effective probation intervention programs in place throughout the United States by providing insight into each of the identified programs. The primary goal of the research was to generate a compendium of best practices that could be assimilated into the community college system. Because of the open admission policy of the California Community College system, students often enter what becomes a revolving door. The loss of students places an economic strain on the campus as fiscal resources are depleted.

Matriculation was instituted throughout the California Community College system to address academic integrity and ensure academic readiness. Among the 107 community college campuses in California, the first four mandates—admission, assessment, orientation and advisement—appear to have been met with acceptance and integration. The fifth component, follow-up, has limited consistency throughout the campuses and is not addressed by every campus despite the mandate to do so. It may be that community colleges have benefited from ongoing funding and limited accountability. This, however, is changing, and the California Community College System is now realizing the need to develop programs that address persistence and retention.

This study has provided a summary of best practices utilized by colleges that have been addressing student retention and offers building blocks for the development of new programs. It is realized that each college has a need to personalize and refine its program by considering the special needs, requirements and obstacles present on its campus.

There was consensus among those interviewed that effective intervention programs can be replicated at community colleges. The themes uncovered include:

campus integration, administrative and fiscal support, early intervention, individual and ongoing student contact, the need to view students holistically and the commitment of skilled personnel who can ascertain the external aspects that impact student persistence.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This has been a comprehensive study of the characteristics of effective intervention programs for students on probation. Future studies could include one or more of the following matters, as they relate to what is found in this dissertation.

1. The development of a model program that could be tested for use among community colleges.

2. A longitudinal study of students who have participated in intervention programs to monitor student outcome and assess the effectiveness of the various approaches.

3. An examination of the opinions of students who have participated in an intervention program comparing the students' perspective of what is effective to that of the practitioner.

4. The development of a research model that could help colleges determine program effectiveness.

5. Interview students who are successful to determine what types of strategies they are utilizing. Develop a synopsis of successful techniques and determine if these strategies can be taught to students experiencing academic difficulty.

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Appendix A—Letter to Panel of Experts

Dawn Lindsay
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E-mail: dawn@lindsay.net

March 28, 2000

Dear Panel Member:

Thank you for agreeing to be a member of my Panel of Experts. I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University seeking an Ed.D. degree in Organizational Leadership. My dissertation topic seeks to determine the characteristics of effective probation intervention program as they relate to students attending the California Community College system.

In my study I intend to investigate existing matriculation programs in order to develop an effective model that encompasses existing successful practices. Accordingly, I intend to interview a number of administrators at colleges located throughout the United States who are responsible for the administration of probation intervention programs at their respective campuses.

I have identified colleges with successful intervention programs and plan to use a semi-structured interview process to collect my data. As a member of my Panel of Experts, I am seeking your expertise in matriculation and your familiarity with students who are experiencing academic difficulty. I have developed an interview guide to use in this process and seek your assistance in validating the questions. The questions have been developed based on my review of the literature related to this topic.

As a member of the panel, I am asking you to read my questions and determine if the proposed interview questions are directly relevant to my topic. A four-point Likert scale is provided to assist you in your evaluation. Please review each question for clarity and scope as well as comprehensibility. If you think the question will solicit the information I am trying to collect please select either a "three" or "four" on the rating scale. If you believe the question will not solicit the type of information I am trying to collect please select either a "one" or "two" and add any recommendations in the "comment" column. I have attached a copy of my literature review to assist you in the validation process.

I appreciate your time and expertise. Enclosed please find a grid with the proposed research questions and a self addressed, stamped envelope. I am hoping you will be able to complete your review by April 5, 2000 so I can include the validation of the instrument during my preliminary oral.

I thank you in advance for your consideration and willingness to assist me. I would be happy to share the results of my study. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at (949) 858-5046 or e-mail me at: dawn@lindsay.net.

Sincerely,

Dawn Lindsay

Appendix B—Rater Sheet

March 28, 2000

Dear Panel Expert:

It is the purpose of this study to differentiate and evaluate the effectiveness of various academic intervention methods used on college campuses. This study will attempt to answer the following question: What are the characteristics of an effective probation intervention program?

Please use the following rating scale to evaluate whether the proposed question meets the purpose of the study. A rating scale has been placed under each question to facilitate the evaluation process. If you would like to make recommendations for revisions, please feel free to add comments or suggestions in the column provided. If you need additional space, please use the back of this form.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Dawn Lindsay

Interview Question and Relevance	Comments
1. Please explain the components of the intervention program that are in place to assist students on academic and progress probation. Is participation mandatory or voluntary? If mandatory, at what point is program participation required? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
2. How are students identified to participate in the program? What was the rationale for this decision? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
3. What student characteristics does your intervention program address? Does your college address external factors contributing to college performance, such as level of family support, first generation college student, returning student, study skills and time management? If yes, what external factors are considered and how are they identified? Are there factors that regardless of student performance result in students automatically being considered for your intervention program? Such factors may include age, disability and ethnicity. Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
4. What success strategies do you provide to students placed on academic and/or progress probation? Who provides these strategies to students? How is student compliance monitored? Are there special benefits afforded to	

students who participate? Are there consequences imposed on students who do not participate? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
5. What characteristics, if any, are identified early in the enrollment process? At what point in the college experience are students identified to participate in the program? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
6. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of successful intervention programs? Can these be replicated at community colleges? If they can be replicated what factors are most important? If they cannot be replicated what factors determine inability to replicate? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
7. What, if any, research is collected to evaluate program effectiveness? How is success or failure determined? What have your results indicated? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
8. What factors drove the decision to establish an intervention program at your college? Why did you decide to implement the type of intervention program that you have in place? Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	
9. Is there anything you would like to	

add to this interview that may be important to this study that was not covered in the questions asked? If so, please explain. Very Relevant (1) Irrelevant (2) Relevant (3) Very Relevant (4)	

Appendix C—Interview Question Guide

Interview Guide

Based on the review of the literature, the following questions have been developed to determine effective characteristics, and each participant will be asked these questions in order to ensure consistency for all of the interviews.

1. Please explain the components of intervention that are in place for students on academic and progress probation.

2. If this is an officially sanctioned program, supported by the entire college, please explain how the college manifests its support of the program. Who administers the program? Who provides funding for the program? How are faculty selected to participate in the program?

3. How are students identified to participate in the program? What was the rationale for this decision? Is participation mandatory or voluntary? If mandatory, at what point is program participation required?

4. Does your college address the external factors contributing to college performance, such as level of family support, first generation college student, returning student, study skills and time management? If yes, what external factors are considered, how are they identified and what interventions are implemented for the student. Are there factors that, regardless of student performance, result in students automatically being considered for your intervention program? Such factors may include age, disability and ethnicity.

5.   What success strategies do you provide to students placed on academic and/or progress probation? Who provides these strategies to students? How is student compliance monitored? Are there any special benefits afforded to students who participate? Are there consequences imposed on students who do not participate?

6.   What characteristics, if any, are identified early in the enrollment process? Who is responsible for identifying these characteristics and what are the characteristics the college identifies?

7.   In your opinion, what are the characteristics of successful intervention programs? Can these programs be replicated at community colleges?

8.   What research is collected to evaluate program effectiveness? Who conducts the research? How is success or failure defined? What success factors do you measure (e.g., retention, persistence, gpa, units completed)? What have your results indicated?

9.   What factors drove the decision to establish an intervention program at your college? Why did you decide to implement the type of intervention program that you have in place?

10.   Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that may be important to this study that was not covered in the questions asked? If so, please explain.

Appendix D—Memo for Content Analysis

To: Richard Potratz
        Sarah Nelson

From: Dawn Lindsay

Re: Content Analysis

Thanks so much for your willingness to assist in this critical aspect of my dissertation. The following is offered to assist in your review of the transcripts for this study. The process requires each of us to read each transcript independently in order to protect against any bias I may bring into the study as well as ensure that a comprehensive content analysis has been completed.

According to Creswell (1998), content analysis requires the researcher to read each transcription in its entirety and determine if there are significant motifs among programs. Merriam (1998) states, "analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read- it is the process of making meaning. Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. These meanings or understandings or insights constitute the findings of a study. Findings can be in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes or categories that cut across the data" (p. 178).

Seidman (1998) recommends the development of categories by reviewing the transcripts without a predetermined goal. One should read the transcripts, mark the areas that are of interest, determine if there is a category that could be assigned to the passage and list it in the margin of the transcript. As you continue reviewing each transcript, additional support may be found as you find new information that supports a particular category. He explains "the process of working with excerpts from participants' interviews, seeking connections among them, explaining those

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connections and building interpretative categories is demanding and involves risks. The danger is that the researcher will try to force excerpts into categories, and the categories and themes that he or she already has in mind, rather than let them develop from the experience of the participants as represented in the interviews" (p. 109).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the development of categories as units. Each unit should reveal information that is relevant to the study and "should be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (p. 345).

According to Merriam (1998), "category construction is data analysis" (p. 182) and she offers the following guidelines for the development of categories.

1. Categories should reflect the purpose of the research. In other words categories are the answer to your research question.

2. Categories should be exhaustive, that is, you should be able to place all data that you decided were important or relevant to the study in a category or subcategory.

3. Categories should be mutually exclusive. A particular unit of data should fit into only one category. If the exact same unit of data can be placed into more than one category, more conceptual work needs to be done to refine your categories.

4. Categories should be sensitizing. The naming of the category should be as sensitive as possible to what is in the data. An outsider should be able to read the categories and gain some sense of their nature.

5. Categories should be conceptually congruent. This means that the same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level. Conceptual congruence is probably the most difficult criterion to apply. Investigators are usually so immersed in their data and their analysis that it is hard for them to see whether or not a set of categories make sense together. (p. 185)

I found that listing each question on a separate sheet of paper, and adding rows for each of the 11 schools, enhanced my ability to see trends and patterns between each of the colleges. The critical aspect of your review is to determine how each participant's answer offered solutions to the questions posed. The semi-structured interview format did provide some structure to the process, but, as you will find, each school has some unique aspects.

Once you have completed your review, please forward it to me so I can compare our responses. If there is discrepancy, we will need to meet in order to determine what, if any, similar themes were evidenced from our independent review. It will be the agreed upon motifs, derived from the consensus of this group, that will be utilized in the final analysis. This process, called "triangulation," will enhance internal validity by using multiple investigators "to confirm emerging findings" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204).

Again, I would like to thank you for your assistance in the process. Please call me if you have any questions.

Dawn

Appendix E—Release Form

June 6, 2000

I participated in a telephone interview conducted by Dawn Lindsay in May 2000 as part of Ms. Lindsay's research requirements for her doctoral dissertation. The purpose of the interview was to determine effective characteristics of existing intervention programs for students on probation. Ms. Lindsay is using this interview for a qualitative study leading to the attainment of her Ed.D. through Pepperdine University. Ms. Lindsay contacted me and asked me to participate voluntarily in the interview.

The interview was tape recorded by Ms. Lindsay with my full knowledge and permission, and I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the transcription of this recording. Aside from the deletion of the name of my college, the transcription is a verbatim account of our conversation.

I realize all colleges interviewed are listed in the methodology section of her paper, and I grant my permission for Ms. Lindsay to list my college and to use the transcription of my interview in connection with her research program as well as the inclusion of such transcription in her final publication

_____ I have reviewed the transcript and agree that it reflects an accurate account of our conversation.

_____ I have reviewed the transcript and found the following is in error. I request this material be edited, as follows, prior to publication.

_____

Name of Administrator Interviewed

_____

Date

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