

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STUDENT-TO-STUDENT  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR FEMALE HOME  
ECONOMICS STUDENTS AT OKLAHOMA  
STATE UNIVERSITY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Significance of the Problem

High school students entered a new phase of their lives when they became freshmen in an institution of higher education whose environment presented special intellectual and social challenges. Within this transitional period from high school to college, these students were faced with the acquisition of learning new tasks. Some of these included: learning new academic skills, responding to the physical separation from one's family, developing new friendships, and handling new responsibility thrust upon them. For many students this was a crucial time in their lives.

Students who are confident in their ability to deal with new situations, who experience a minimum of threat and fear in new settings, and who find it relatively easy to identify with new persons, goals and values may need little more than an opportunity to pursue their academic career in any field they choose. By contrast, however, many students will be characterized by feelings of inadequacy both with regard to development of new relationships with ideas and with people.  
(38)

Nearly 40 years ago, William Cowley (9) reminded his colleagues that "once a college has admitted a student it has a moral obligation to do everything within reason to help him succeed." Although college and university personnel have been concerned with the problems of students, the attrition phenomenon has existed.



One fact of American life is that six out of every ten college students discover that the college of their choice is the wrong place for them. They either flunk, transfer, or drop out of it. This has been true for each of the past forty years. Despite changes in the nation's fortunes, despite changes in the colleges, despite the fact that each incoming freshman class has proven brighter than the last, despite increasing social and parental pressures to go to college, the 'attrition rate,' as the colleges call it, has remained exactly the same. (24)

The rate of student attrition in colleges and universities has not only been determined by the loss of the academically dismissed but largely through the loss of a large number of students who have voluntarily withdrawn, dropped out, or transferred to another institution. Newman (29) reported that "of the more than one million young people who enter college each year, fewer than half will complete two years of study, and only about one-third will ever complete a four-year course of study." Between 500,000 and 600,000 students have transferred yearly from one institution to another, with approximately 75 percent completing college work for a baccalaureate degree (42). One-half of all the withdrawals in American institutions have occurred by the end of the freshman year, one-third of whom were in good academic standing at the time of their withdrawal (24, 33). Even among high aptitude students, ten to fifteen percent have dropped out of college; and the results were often "a more permanent state of affairs for the females than the males" (1).

The most recent attrition study conducted by the American Council on Education involved 217 institutions throughout the nation. Sievert (37) summarized the findings as follows:

By the most severe measure of persistence--completing a bachelor's degree within four years--slightly more than half (53 per cent) of all students can be classified as dropouts. If one includes students still enrolled for work toward a degree

at the first institution, the dropout rate is only 41.5 per cent.

According to several researchers, the freshman year attrition rate will likely remain around 40 percent (2, 5, 22, 41).

Student attrition has been a major concern to educators. The Division of Home Economics at Oklahoma State University has conducted three research studies concerning the reasons for student discontinuance and possible suggestions for the improvement of existing programs (25, 31, 32). A fourth study was initiated in 1972 to provide more information concerning special groups of students who had discontinued from the division within the past six years. The author assisted Cozine (10) as a graduate research assistant in the compilation of information concerning the discontinued students and freshman students enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program during the 1972 fall semester. The 1972-73 Dropout Study was designed to identify the major causes of student attrition within the Division of Home Economics and to determine possible techniques and procedures useful in increasing the retention rate of present and future students.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this developmental study was to identify certain methods and techniques useful in a program designed to increase the retention rate of students enrolled in the College of Home Economics at Oklahoma State University by providing student-to-student assistance. This study was an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Why do so many freshman drop out of college by the end of their first year?

2. How can upperclassmen assist freshmen in making adjustments to the college environment?
3. How can a discipline fulfill the needs of students and assist in their adjustment to the college environment?

#### Objectives of the Study

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To identify specific factors related to the discontinuation of students from colleges and universities.
2. To work cooperatively with upperclassmen in the development of techniques and procedures useful in providing assistance to students enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of a student-to-student assistance program in relation to student attrition and to make recommendations based upon this evaluation.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to providing assistance to female freshman and sophomore students enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program at Oklahoma State University. A ten-week period during the 1973 spring semester was designated for the development of the program for three principal reasons: 1) the results of previous research studies which had used a ten-week period for a developmental program (6, 45), 2) the amount of time in which the Home Economics Education majors who were going to be involved in student teaching during the latter portion of

the semester could devote to the program, and 3) the amount of time the researcher could spend conducting the program, evaluating the results, and formulating the thesis study prior to graduation.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Student attrition - a statistical reference to students who voluntarily withdrew, dropped out, or were academically dismissed from an institution (8).

Dropout student - a student who discontinued enrollment from a college or university prior to graduation (23, 34).

Transfer student - a student who withdrew from one institution and entered another institution; a student who withdrew from the Division of Home Economics and entered another college within Oklahoma State University.

Persister - a student who completed the freshman year at the initial institution of enrollment (34).

Student assistants - upperclassmen enrolled in the College of Home Economics who volunteered to participate in the developmental program as "big sisters" by providing assistance to the participants.

Participants - students enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program during the 1972 fall semester who volunteered to participate in the developmental program by receiving assistance from the student assistants, also called "little sisters."

Coordinator - the researcher who designed the student-to-student assistance program, conducted weekly meetings with the student assistants, and conducted evaluation sessions with the participants and the

student assistants.

Basic Home Economics Program - the major program in which all entering freshman and sophomore students enrolled in the College of Home Economics were members until they made a declaration of their major in a home economics subject-matter area or transferred to another college within the University or to another institution.

#### Method of Procedure

The researcher followed the following procedure to achieve the stated objectives of this study:

First, a review of literature was made concerning student attrition in colleges and universities to identify specific factors related to the discontinuance of students. The results of institutional research conducted by Oklahoma State University and the previous dropout studies conducted by the Division of Home Economics were also reviewed. The results of programs initiated by Oklahoma State University and other institutions provided ideas and suggestions for the implementation of a student-to-student assistance program within the College of Home Economics.

Secondly, upperclassmen who served as student assistants met weekly with the coordinator to discuss the various phases of the program. Certain techniques and procedures were identified in these meetings as being useful in providing assistance to university students. Materials were developed and gathered by the coordinator for use during the ten-week program by the student assistants with the participants.

Thirdly, the effectiveness of a student-to-student assistance program was evaluated by the individuals involved in the program--

participants, student assistants, and coordinator. Recommendations were made for the implementation of a similar program with future students.

### Summary

This chapter has presented the significance of the problem, a statement of the problem, objectives of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms, and method of procedure. Chapter II will present a review of literature used as a basis for the development of the student-to-student assistance program which will later be described in Chapters III and IV. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The decision to go to college has often been the result of a combination of influential factors: academic interest and ability, attitudes of students and their parents toward a college degree, emotional characteristics of the students, financial resources, marital plans, educational and occupational status of the parents, admission policies of colleges and universities, job opportunities for high school and college graduates, and the vocational interests of students (13, 20).

Most students have visualized the college campus as an environment filled with intellectual experiences providing opportunity to grow in knowledge and skill. Students have chosen a particular institution to fulfill their vocational aspirations and to receive the educational preparation needed for their chosen vocation. For some, college has provided the hope of rising in social status or the possibility of meeting a future mate. The reasons for attending college have been idealistic, practical, economic, intellectual and social. Although a large number of students have been motivated to attend college, many have discontinued within the four years following matriculation.

Ultimately 60 percent of all who enter a college are graduated from somewhere at some time. This means that two of every six dropouts will return to formal education to earn their degrees at the schools they originally entered, or at some other college to which they transferred. But four of

every ten students who enter college will drop out, never to return. (24)

Why have so many students dropped out of college? Was it because of illness, financial difficulties, grades, or general problems of personal dissatisfaction? Researchers have been trying to answer these questions for over half a century with the results indicating that no one can effectively predict who will drop out or the precise cause of the withdrawal. This chapter will present a review of selected literature concerning student attrition which was useful in developing an understanding of the extent of student attrition, the characteristics of dropouts, and the reasons for their discontinuance. Studies pertaining to student attrition in the Division of Home Economics at Oklahoma State University will also be included. The last section will be concerned with literature describing retention programs conducted in various institutions.

#### Major Attrition Studies Conducted

Between 1918 and 1958

The most comprehensive study reported to this date was supervised by Iffert (22) under the sponsorship of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. A national survey was conducted to determine the reasons 13,700 students had entered 149 institutions in the fall of 1950 as freshmen and the reasons for their discontinuance within the four succeeding years. Iffert (22) found the major reasons given by students in universities, technological institutions, junior colleges, liberal arts colleges, and teachers colleges to be primarily career-oriented. The desire to specialize in a particular field was ranked



second by the university students but first by the other students. Occupational goals were of primary importance to males, while females attached more importance to "pure intellectual pursuits than to occupational preparation" (22).

The attrition rate for these institutions averaged fifty percent, with only 39 percent graduating within the normal four-year period from the institution of first enrollment. The attrition rate was lower for private institutions (52 percent) than for public institutions (67 percent). The first year of college was the most critical dropout period. The most important reason given by the males for discontinuance was enlistment in the military service, followed by lack of interest in studies and personal financial difficulties. For women students, marriage was the major reason for discontinuance. "Taking a full-time job was rated second in importance, and personal financial difficulties ranked third in importance among women" (22).

Iffert (22) also found that "nearly 40 percent of transfers occur during or at the end of the first year, and more than 83 percent of the total occur by the end of the second year,"

Among students who transferred from 4-year institutions, general dissatisfaction ranked first in importance as the reason for transfer. Second in importance was change in curricular interest, paralleled by lack of interest in studies, and third was the desire to be nearer home, paralleled by desire to attend a less expensive institution. Low grades and size of institution followed in order of importance as reasons for transfer. (22)

As a result of his findings, Iffert (22) drew these conclusions:

Of the students who graduate in the upper half of their classes from secondary schools in the United States, about one-half go to college on a full-time basis and about three-fourths of them eventually receive a baccalaureate degree. No more than 60 percent of all students who enter degree granting institutions receive degrees.

Another outstanding research study was conducted by Summerskill (41) at Cornell University. Thirty-five attrition studies concerning students enrolled between 1918 and 1958 in hundreds of institutions throughout the nation were reviewed. Iffert's (22) study was included as part of the findings. The reported average percentages of 53, 50, 49, and 51 represented the attrition rate respectively for the 1920's, 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's.

The results indicated that one-third of all the students had discontinued for academic reasons. The majority of the reasons, however, were contributed to the student's failure to "meet psychological, sociological, or economic demands rather than the strictly academic demands of college life" (41). Factors associated with dropping out were summarized as follows:

- (1) Age per se does not affect attrition, although older undergraduates may encounter more obstacles to graduation.
- (2) Men and women withdraw at similar rates but not necessarily for similar reasons because more women withdraw for nonacademic reasons, primarily marriage.
- (3) A student's economic and social background affects his adjustment to the environment of a given college and is, therefore, a factor in attrition. The educational values held by parents do tend to have an affect on a student's matriculation in college more than his socioeconomic level.
- (4) A student's home community is related to his success or failure at college when there is a degree of disparity between the cultural and educational characteristics of the college at which the student enrolls and that of his local hometown community.
- (5) Secondary school grades are generally recognized as the best existing predictors of college grades. Ten out of eleven studies found dropouts to have lower grade averages than graduates.

- (6) The largest number of dropouts involve motivational forces--goals, interests, and satisfactions relative to college and other facets of the student's life.
- (7) Vocational motivation is more demonstrably related to attrition. Students with definite vocational choices are more likely to graduate from college.
- (8) Factors related to personal and social maladjustments at college only contribute to a minor degree to student attrition. Among the psychological characteristics that have been attributed to unsuccessful students are immaturity, rebellion and nonconformity, worry and anxiety, social inadequacy, nonadaptability, lack of independence and responsibility.
- (9) Personal illness or illness of a family member does not contribute to a high percentage of dropouts.
- (10) Among the leading causes of dropouts financial problems rank next to motivation and study problems are found in a substantial minority of the students who leave college before the undergraduate work is completed. (41)

One of the studies reviewed by Summerskill (41) involved home economics students in 14 colleges and universities in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Nelson's (28) study has been the most extensive attrition study conducted within units of home economics. Information was gathered concerning freshman students who had entered these institutions from the fall of 1943 through the spring of 1948 and had later dropped out before the spring of 1950. The results revealed that:

About half of the freshmen entering home economics in colleges during the years 1943-45 dropped out before graduation. Mortality was greater in the large institutions (53 percent) than in the small colleges (32 percent). The percentage of students who dropped out of home economics in these colleges ranged from 19 to 55 percent. (28)

The students identified their basic reasons for majoring in home economics as being for practical and professional purposes.

About a third said they had taken home economics because they thought it would be practical; about a third gave as their reason preparation for professional jobs in home economics; a sixth gave preparation for homemaking, and the others said

that they had no real interest in the field but had been persuaded to enroll by their parents or because they could not get into the field of their choice. (28)

The majority of the students had discontinued for nonacademic reasons. Marriage was the reason most frequently cited for dropping out of college. The greatest rate of attrition occurred within the first two years. Nelson (28) concluded that "lack of effective guidance and counseling before and during college attendance seemed to be associated with withdrawal."

#### Selected Attrition Studies Since 1960

The research studies conducted since 1960 have been reflective of the results found by Iffert (22) and Summerskill (41). Many researchers have tried to compare the students within a particular institution who had dropped out of college with the results of the previously mentioned studies. Several researchers have also been trying to isolate a set of specific background and environmental characteristics which are highly related to attrition among college students.

#### Characteristics of Dropout Students

Several studies have been conducted to distinguish the personality characteristics between students who persist to graduation and those who withdraw within the succeeding four years following matriculation. Most of the studies did not differentiate between early (during a semester) withdrawals and late withdrawals (after a semester) or between voluntary dropouts and academic dismissals. Very little emphasis or information on preventive measures were noted.

Nevertheless, some studies conducted both in large and small

institutions have presented similar findings concerning the characteristics of students who have discontinued their education. In comparison with persisters, dropout students achieved lower aptitude test scores and secondary grades (2, 3, 36, 43), were more independent (3, 4, 19), tended to engage less frequently in extracurricular activities (7, 15, 36), and lacked definite vocational plans (15, 30, 43). These findings were also similar to the results of the studies conducted by Iffert (22) and Summerskill (41).

#### Academic Factors Involved in Attrition

Secondary school grades, scholastic rank, and aptitude test scores have been designated as the best existing predictors of college success (2, 3, 22, 41). Institutional research conducted at Southwest Texas State College revealed students who scored eighteen or below as a composite score on the American College Test to be "potential dropouts" with only "one chance in three of continuing their second year in good standing" (6). Educators discovered that it was not difficult to predict the academic success from high school grades and achievement scores, but it was "difficult, if not impossible, to predict perseverance" (14).

#### Nonacademic Factors Involved in Attrition

Panos and Astin (30) contended as the result of a national survey conducted by the American Council on Education that personal and environmental factors had a greater influence upon student attrition than academic achievement. The reasons men discontinued, given in the order of their ranking, were: change in plans, dissatisfactions with college,

finances, wanting to reconsider interests and goals, and academic failure. On the other hand, the reasons women left were, respectively: marriage, dissatisfaction with college, change in career interests, finances, and reconsideration of interests and goals (30).

A recent study conducted at Oklahoma State University found the attrition rate of its beginning freshmen to be approximately 42 percent (16). Although the entrance requirements had been raised within the past ten years, the retention rate of beginning freshmen decreased about four percent over this ten-year period. The results of a questionnaire given to 108 student assistants of single student housing presented these opinions, in order of their frequency of mention, as to the reasons students leave the university: finances, grades, marriage, university student policy, employment opportunity, instructional program not offered by the institution, family problems, friends at another institution, dislike of faculty, and non-involvement of students in social issues.

In a Withdrawal Survey of students enrolled in the fall of 1971 at Oklahoma State University, the results indicated that more males had transferred than females (16). Females listed medical reasons, family problems, and lack of motivation respectively as the major reasons for their discontinuance; whereas, males listed finances, lack of motivation, and family problems.

Goetz and Leach (17) studied students at the University of New Mexico during a four year period from 1962 to 1965 to determine if there were significant differences between continuers and withdrawees. The attrition rate for the freshman year was reported as being 67 percent. The results of this study presented these findings:

The education of the father did not significantly differentiate continuers from withdrawees. The education of the mother showed a sharp difference; the mothers of the continuers had more education.

There was little difference in the attitudes of the continuers and the withdrawees concerning the various aspects of campus life. (17)

This study found the continuers and the withdrawees to both have problems, such as low grades, marriage responsibilities, financial difficulties, illness, and unhappiness to the same degree (17).

In 1964 Astin (1) published the results of a longitudinal study of college dropouts in a sample of 6,600 students of high aptitude. The dropout rate among these students was 10.4 percent with the girls having a significantly higher dropout rate than the boys. Astin (1) stated:

Male dropouts are more inclined to check doubts about the appropriate course of study, poor academic performance, and dissatisfaction with being a student as their reasons for leaving college. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to check family responsibilities and money.

In another study, Astin (2) presented these conclusions:

Women get higher grades than men both in high school and in college. The academic performance of the freshman female surpasses that of the average male freshman, even though they are matched in terms of their high school grades and aptitude test scores. On the other hand, women are more likely to drop out of college after the freshman year, in spite of their superior academic performance.

Lum (27) postulated a link to exist between self-confidence and achievement for female students at the University of Hawaii. The results established the difference between the successful and the less successful college student of similar aptitude to be one primarily of attitude and motivation, rather than reported study habits. Over-achievers tended to be more self-confident, highly motivated, and committed to vocational aspirations. On the other hand, underachievers

tended to procrastinate more, rely more upon external pressures than self-imposed pressures to complete an assignment, and possess dissatisfactions with their courses and their vocational preparation. Such students were "more critical of educational methodology and more often express doubt as to the value of a college education than over-achievers" (27).

Several research studies indicated that almost all of the problems reported as reasons for dropping out of college were also shared by those who did not drop out but who persisted to graduation (4, 34, 44). What made the difference? Hackman and Dysinger (18) believed that the key to student persistence in college was based primarily upon student commitment. In their sample of 1400 students enrolled in three Mid-western Universities, these conclusions were drawn:

Students who enroll in college with a strong commitment to a college education will be more likely to persist through the critical first year of college than will the students who are less committed.

The results suggest that a student's home and family may be highly important in determining his reaction to the college experience. Students with better-educated parents tend to be more committed to college, as do students who view their relationship with their parents as good. (18)

Students within these institutions listed the following reasons for their discontinuance: lack of interest, lack of definite plans for a major and/or a career, discouragement due to low grades, and illness (18).

The results of the review of these studies revealed three fundamental findings to the researcher: 1) personality characteristics of dropout students established in one study do not necessarily apply to all students who have discontinued their education, but similar characteristics have been found relating to students' decisions to withdraw;



2) researchers have been unsuccessful in isolating specific characteristics for discontinued students because similar characteristics and problems have been shown to exist for persisters and dropouts; and 3) intellectual and nonintellectual factors were involved in student attrition. Iffert (22) commented:

It might be inferred . . . that withdrawal from college is associated not so much with dissatisfactions but with the inability, or unwillingness, to endure dissatisfactions.

In 1962 Jex and Merrill (23) conducted a study of students at the University of Utah who had transferred to other institutions. The reasons given for transferring were: to be nearer home, dissatisfaction, to attend a less expensive school, to attend a smaller institution, and lack of interest in studies. These findings were very similar to Iffert's (22) results of the reasons students had transferred in the early 1950's.

Similarly, Stordahl (40) found Michigan students in the late 1960's to have transferred to be closer to their homes. These comments were made:

Students whose homes were relatively close to the University were more likely to drop out than transfer, but those from a greater distance more often transferred. Students felt that a desire to be closer to home had more influence than any other factor on their decisions to transfer. (40)

It should be noted that the act of leaving college has not always been the termination of formal education for each person. Dropouts in one institution have become successful persisters in another institution whose facilities and services have often better met the needs of students. Many students have returned to college campuses to complete their education. Van Dyne (42) reported that of the 500,000 to 600,000 students who transfer each year, 75 percent will receive a

baccalaureate degree.

#### Attrition Studies Related to Home Economics

##### Students at Oklahoma State University

Four attrition studies have been conducted by the Division of Home Economics at Oklahoma State University. The first study was conducted by Lawson (25) in 1954 concerning students enrolled from the fall of 1950 through the spring of 1953. Data was collected the semester following the student's failure to return to the university. The attrition rate varied slightly during the three year period, averaging 33 percent. Almost one-half of the entering students had discontinued by the end of their freshman year with the greatest loss being reported at the end of the spring semester.

Nearly one-half of those who had dropped out had enrolled in home economics primarily for the purpose of preparing themselves for both homemaking and a career. One-fifth had taken home economics as preparation for marriage only, while over a tenth had been interested in preparing for a career.

Marriage was the primary reason given by nearly half of the discontinued students for their leaving the institution. Approximately one-fourth had found another discipline which had better met their needs, while one-sixth had lost interest in home economics. Other reasons also given were: financial difficulties, employment opportunities, unsatisfactory grades, and inadequate counseling (25).

In 1961 Pate (32) continued the study began by Lawson (25). The second study involved students enrolled in the division between 1953 and 1959 who had discontinued their enrollment within the four years

following their entrance. The responses to a mailed questionnaire revealed the reasons the discontinued students had entered college to be based primarily upon practical and professional purposes. The students viewed the preparation for earning a living as more important than gaining a "broad liberal education contributing to the full development of their potentials" (32).

Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they had not remained in the university as long as they had expected, the majority of whom had discontinued by their sophomore year. Marriage and marriage with related responsibilities were the most frequently mentioned reasons for discontinuance (32). Dissatisfaction with the curriculum, health of self or family member, and indecisiveness concerning a major were the next most frequently mentioned reasons the dropouts presented for their leaving the institution.

The third study was also conducted by Pate (31), but was much smaller in comparison to the students studied than the second study. A comparison was made of the students enrolled in the College of Home Economics in the fall semester of 1962 with those enrolled in the fall 1963 semester. The attrition rate for this period was approximately 30 percent with the freshman year being the most critical dropout period.

In 1972 a fourth study was initiated to provide more information concerning special groups of students who had discontinued within the past six years (10). The data used in tabulating the findings of this report also included information provided from the third divisional study conducted by Pate (31). The attrition rate for three periods--1972-63, 1967-68, and 1971-72--was approximately one-third of the total enrollment for each period. Although the percent of entering freshmen

had decreased within these periods, the rate of attrition remained approximately the same. The highest rate of attrition for all three years was for students enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program who had not declared a major prior to their discontinuance (10).

As part of this fourth study, two other projects were simultaneously conducted. Information was collected concerning students who had discontinued between 1968 and 1972 to determine the reasons for their going to college as well as the reasons for their discontinuance. The second project included collecting information concerning the reasons freshman students who had entered the Basic Home Economics Program in the 1972 fall semester had decided to go to college. Identical statements were given to the members of both groups on two different instruments.

Both groups of students rated career-oriented reasons as having greatly influenced their decisions to attend college. Nearly three-fourths of the freshmen and over two-thirds of the discontinued students felt that a college education was important for their selected vocation. Preparation for marriage and family life and academic reasons followed as being important in the students' decisions to continue their education beyond secondary school. Only one out of four dropouts and one out of ten freshmen had been greatly influenced by their parents to go to college, with nearly as many having been influenced by their teachers, peers, or the former college attendance of older brothers and/or sisters. It appeared that the decision to go to college made by freshman students who had entered the division between the fall of 1968 and the fall of 1972 was based primarily upon personal desires, interests, and motivations for professional and practical

preparation for life.

One-third of the students who had discontinued between 1968 and 1972 checked items relating to marriage, marriage responsibilities, and employment of husband as being the reason for their discontinuance. A combination of several reasons revealed dissatisfaction with the college and the home economics program to be related to the withdrawal of several students. One-fifth had equally checked grades and the indecisiveness concerning a major as causative factors in their dropping out of the institution. However, the act of withdrawal had not terminated the formal education of 62 percent of the discontinued students who had transferred to other institutions. Reasons given for their transferral were: to attend a smaller institution, change in curricular interests, to be closer to one's hometown, and to attend a less expensive institution. These responses were very similar to the previously mentioned results of the studies by Iffert (22) and by Jex and Merrill (23).

The results of these four divisional studies have revealed similar reasons for discontinuance to have existed for the past twenty years: marriage, dissatisfactions, lack of interest, and indecisiveness concerning a college major. The rate of attrition has remained approximately the same during this twenty year period with the freshman year being the most crucial dropout period.

#### Development of Retention Programs

According to Lindgren (26), an individual's interaction with other students was the most significant aspect of the college environment for that individual. A student's association with other students has often

played an important role in the development of his attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior (26).

Home economics students, according to Nelson (28) and Pate (32), need counseling and guidance in realms of personal affairs as well as in decisions concerning a vocational career. Although home economists may not be specifically trained to be counselors, they can contribute to the development of personal interrelationships with students. Examples of successful programs have illustrated methods which the discipline of home economics could employ; and thus, the attrition rate of home economics students could possibly be reduced. The importance of the development of such programs was illustrated by Cross (11):

The relationships between personal problems and low achievement can be regarded as cause or effect or both. Young people with personal problems are unable to devote full attention to school work . . . . Personal problems can lead to poor school performance, which may lead to problems of self-doubt and self-dissatisfaction, which, added to further burden of poor grades, may increase personal insecurity. While schools cannot be expected to solve the personal and home problems of students, they can offer personal counseling for a period in life that many young people find quite difficult.

Several institutions have initiated programs to assist students in making adjustment to the college environment. Many institutions have tried to make provisions for the fulfillment of student needs based upon the results of research indicating the desire of students to have more conferences with advisers and/or instructors. However, due to the lack of finances available for additional personnel needed to accomplish these goals and to the amount of advisees given to advisers, the prevailing systems have often failed to provide sufficient assistance.

Brown and his associates (6) reported that several institutions have become aware of the immediate needs of entering freshmen for

reassurance and information during the initial period of adjustment. Such institutions have been utilizing upperclassmen to assist in the early orientation of freshmen or to provide assistance in adapting to dormitory life.

A Special Service Project was created at Oklahoma State University as part of the Division of Student Affairs to help entering students make adjustment to the university environment. Nineteen student aides provided student-to-student assistance for 165 freshman students who were part of the financial aids program and "who might not get the most benefit from their college education because of inadequate high school preparation, economic or cultural backgrounds, or some physical handicap" (39). Upperclassmen provided assistance with study habits, decisions concerning college majors, and assistance in areas of special need designated by the individual freshman student. The student aides, who were paid by the Financial Aids Department for their work, met weekly during training periods to improve their counseling skills and to share methods which had been useful in assisting these students. As a result of their participation in the program, several of the aides became interested in personal guidance as their vocational occupation (39).

Brown and Zunker (45) experimented with various counseling programs designed to improve study skills, scholastic motivation, and academic achievement. A comparative study was made in 1964 of the effectiveness of professional counselors and upperclassmen serving as counselors with entering freshmen at Southwest Texas State College. The counselees expressed a greater preference for working with the upperclassmen, believing that the information received from these

students was more beneficial than the materials obtained from college counselors. Female students were shown to have made significantly better use of the study skills acquired during the counseling program than the males. Greater acceptance of student counselors was portrayed by the freshman students (45).

Consequently, a similar program at Southwest Texas State College was initiated in 1967 (6). The counselees were limited to freshmen identified as potential dropouts, those who scored 18 or below on the American College Test. The objectives of this program were to increase the survival rate of the potential dropouts by providing individual assistance in these areas: budgeting of time, taking class notes, reading assignments, and studying for tests. After having been encouraged to participate, several students volunteered. A ten-week program was designed which approximated a total of eleven hours of participating time for each student. It was concluded as a result of this program that student-to-student counseling was both a practical and a productive method of assisting students who may have difficulty in making adjustments to the academic environment (6).

#### Summary

Every year a large number of students have discontinued enrollment in an institution of higher education. The act of dropping out has not always been a permanent behavior for all students. Some have transferred to other institutions or have dropped out of college temporarily to return and continue their education at a later date. But for some, discontinuance has marked the termination of their formal education.

The literature reviewed in this chapter was selected in an attempt



to answer the question, "Why do so many freshman drop out of college by the end of their first year?" No simple answers have been given. More than 180 studies have been conducted to determine the reasons for student attrition with the results indicating that to date no one has been able to effectively predict who will drop out or the precise cause of the withdrawal. The most critical period throughout the years has been the freshman year. Reasons for discontinuance have been classified into academic and nonacademic categories. The majority of the studies from 1918 to 1972 have revealed nonacademic factors to have played a greater role than academic factors in the decision of students to discontinue their education. The reasons for student attrition have basically been the same: marriage, employment, financial difficulties, academic difficulties, military service, and factors which might be associated with low motivation for college. Even though the national attrition rate has decreased from 53 percent in the 1920's to 40 percent in the 1970's, student attrition has remained a problem of national concern.

Various institutions have illustrated the value of developing programs designed to provide assistance to entering students. The researcher felt that the pendulum of higher education must swing back to a period of time which is concerned about students as individuals, not as statistical numbers associated with financial gains. If educators are concerned with the loss of potential talent to the nation and the personal distress of students caused by academic failure or disenchantment with the college environment, then programs need to be developed to assist students in making adjustments to the college environment and

in developing personal commitment to their chosen profession. It was with these beliefs that this research study was developed,

## CHAPTER III

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDENT-TO-STUDENT

#### ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The purpose of this study was to develop a program designed to increase the retention rate of students within the Division of Home Economics. The program was developed to provide assistance by upperclassmen to students enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program. This chapter will present a description of the development and organization of the program, the students who volunteered to participate as student assistants and as the participants, and the implementation of the student-to-student assistance program within the College of Home Economics.

#### Procedures Used in Developing the Program

A review of literature was made concerning similar programs which had been conducted by other institutions to provide assistance to college students. Interviews were held with the Coordinator of Special Services in the Office of Student Affairs at Oklahoma State University to become more familiar with the university's Special Service Project. Meetings were also held with several university students who were participating in this project as student aides. The results of these efforts provided many ideas and suggestions for the implementation of a student-to-student assistance program for female home economics

students enrolled in the basic program.

#### Selection of the Student Assistants

The purposes of the student-to-student assistance program were explained to members of the Home Economics Student Council and to Home Economics Education majors. Twenty-six upperclassmen volunteered to participate as "big sisters" by providing assistance to students enrolled in the basic program. Members of the Home Economics Student Council, a body composed of representatives of the seven home economics clubs and the student classes, selected the research study as a semester project. They also desired to evaluate the results of this developmental study for possible sponsorship with future home economics students. Of the 26 students who volunteered to serve as student assistants, eight were council members. A freshman member of the council volunteered to serve as a participant. An explanation of the program was first made to the council's members to provide insight into the attitudes of upperclassmen concerning participation in the program. Home Economics Education majors were also informed about the program because it was believed that prospective home economics teachers could be benefited by working in a person-to-person relationship with students.

Twenty of the 26 upperclassmen who volunteered to serve as student assistants were Home Economics Education majors, 15 of whom would be engaged in student teaching during the latter portion of the spring semester. One student assistant was majoring in Foods, Nutrition, and Institutional Management; two were majoring in Family Relations and Child Development; and three had a double major in Home Economics

Education and Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandizing. Nine student assistants were married, three of whom had children. One was a sophomore, six were juniors, and nineteen were seniors. One-third of these students had previously transferred to the University from other Oklahoma institutions.

When asked why they had volunteered to serve as student assistants in the program, 16 of the 26 stated that they had wanted to help other students. Nine students had remembered how they felt as a freshman and wished that someone had helped them in making adjustments to the university environment. To help retain students in the home economics program was the reply given by five upperclassmen, while two stated that they hoped to learn more about the home economics program through their participation in helping other students. Two students also indicated that they thought the experience of helping others would help them to be better teachers.

#### Selection of the Participants

When freshman and sophomore students entered the College of Home Economics, they were enrolled in the Basic Home Economics Program until they had made a declaration of a major in a home economics subject-matter area, transferred to another institution or to another college within the university, or discontinued their education from the university. All students enrolled in the basic program were required to take the Home Economics 1113 course. The researcher met with 188 students during one of these class periods at the close of 1972 fall semester to explain the special program which was to be implemented during the following spring semester.

Students were given opportunity to list on an information sheet how an upperclassman could be of assistance to them in their college life by answering questions or by providing assistance (see Appendix A). The researcher explained that participation in the program would involve approximately one hour a week in meetings with the upperclassmen. Provision was made on the information sheet for each student to indicate a willingness to participate in the program and receive assistance from upperclassmen in the areas which they had listed. Sixty students answered affirmatively.

#### Characteristics of the Participants

Biographical information concerning the students who completed the information sheet was obtained from data collected for the 1972-73 Dropout Study. The 60 participants were more similar than different from the 138 students who did not volunteer to receive assistance from upperclassmen. Both groups of students were similar in the educational levels and occupational status of their parents, size of home communities, and size of high school graduating class. Six of the ten students enrolled in the basic program who were aged 20 and 21 volunteered to become participants. Likewise, half of those who were 19 years of age also volunteered. It appeared that more of the older than younger students desired to receive assistance from upperclassmen with their problems or questions.

Biographical information concerning the 60 participants was tabulated and analyzed. All but five were single. The majority of the participants were aged 18 or 19 and freshmen. Five were sophomores, three of whom had transferred from other institutions. One participant

was a Stillwater resident, and four were out-of-state residents. The single participants, with the exception of the local resident, resided in university dormitories.

One-half of the students were from homes where both parents were employed. The fathers were engaged primarily in professional-managerial occupations; the mothers, in clerical occupations. Three-fourths of the students' parents had both graduated from high school, one-fourth of whom were also college graduates. No major differences were noted between the educational levels of the parents. Nearly one-half of the mothers and the fathers had attended college for one or two years.

Fifty percent of the participants scored 18 or below as a composite score on the American College Test. According to Brown's (6) research, these students might have been classified as "potential drop-outs" when they entered the university. However, 85 percent of the participants had achieved a 2.0 grade point average and higher for the 1972 fall semester. Forty-two percent had achieved a grade point average of 3.0 or better. In comparison with the total group of students who completed the information sheet, one-third of the students who had achieved a 3.0 grade point average had volunteered to receive assistance from upperclassmen. Thus, it did not appear that academic difficulties were the major reasons a majority of the participants had desired to receive assistance from upperclassmen in the College of Home Economics.

#### Reasons Participants Volunteered for the Program

The type of assistance desired by the participants was categorized

from the tabulation of the responses given on the information sheet into four areas: Personal, social, academic, and career. Over a third of the 60 participants expressed a need for assistance with the selection of their classes and teachers for the spring semester. These responses were given at the close of the fall semester and seemed to represent their most pressing needs.

One-fourth requested assistance with the development of better study habits, especially in these areas: taking class notes, studying for tests, writing reports, preparing class assignments, and organizing time for study. Over one-third of the participants hoped that an upperclassman could assist them in the selection of a major and in making a vocational selection.

Requests were also made by over a third of the 60 participants for information concerning degree requirements for various subject-matter areas, information concerning the home economics clubs and organizations, and information about the scheduled campus activities for the spring semester. Several students expressed a desire to develop a friendship with an upperclassman who could be called when small problems developed or questions arose. Additional comments included: communication with upperclassmen majoring in various areas of home economics, information about how to get along with a roommate, and assistance in developing more self-confidence.

#### Reasons Participants Came to College

College students have brought with them to the university campus their expectations and perceptions of college life. The reasons students go to college were considered to be very important in



understanding their goals and expectations. It was believed that an understanding of these reasons would be beneficial in providing the type of assistance and materials needed in a developmental program designed to assist students in their college life.

Information was gathered from the 1972-73 Dropout Study concerning the reasons the 60 participants had come to college. Career-oriented reasons were rated as having been of primary importance in their decisions to go to college. Personal reasons ranked second and academic reasons third. In comparison with the students who did not volunteer to participate, the participants had ranked personal reasons higher than the other students in the basic program. It was speculated that these reasons and values held by the participants might have been another major reason for their decision to volunteer for the special program.

The participants ranked three career items as being very important in their reasons for attending college: preparation for a chosen vocation, desire to obtain a higher-paying job, and the development of competent skills useful throughout one's life. Over half of the students desired greatly to make new friends in college and to acquire knowledge and values for a satisfying marriage and family life. It was also interesting to notice the number of participants who desired to broaden their education with the inclusion of cultural interests (see Appendix B).

The participants' responses to the traditional reasons for going to college revealed that parents, peers, teachers, and community leaders had not influenced these students in coming to college as much as their own personal interests. The desire to prepare for the dual role of

homemaker and wage-earner was more important than becoming a member of a sorority or learning about the political organizations of our government.

### Implementation of the Program

The objectives of the student-to-student assistance program were developed from the data collected from the information sheets and from the reasons the participants presented for their decisions to attend college. The program was organized into four phases: the development of relationships, academic adjustment, career information, and evaluation. Objectives were developed for each phase. Of the ten-week period designated for the research study, eight weeks were planned for the student assistants to have weekly contacts with the participants, one week was spent in orientation meetings with the student assistants, and the last week was spent by the student assistants and the participants in evaluation conferences with the coordinator.

An outline of the program was prepared for the student assistants to use as a guideline. Suggestions were given on the outline for methods of achieving the designated objectives for each phase. An example of the outline follows.

#### Phase I Preliminary Organization and Development of Relationships (5 weeks)

Objective: To become acquainted with the participants.

1. Secure designated meeting time and place.
2. Become familiar with her campus housing arrangements and class schedule.
3. Inquire concerning her goals and expectations of the university environment and her college life.
4. Become knowledgeable concerning the student's chosen area of home economics.

Objective: To acquaint students with social activities on campus.

1. Introduce students to others who may have similar interests, hobbies, and occupational goals.
2. Invite students to attend campus activities with you or encourage them to attend the activities with their friends.
  - a. Home economics club meetings.
  - b. International teas held the third Thursday of each month in the Student Union.
  - c. An Allied Arts performance or drama presentation.
  - d. Recitals and musical presentations.
  - e. Athletic events.

#### Phase II Academic Adjustment (2 weeks)

Objective: To assist in individual adjustment of the scholastic requirements and procedures for securing university assistance with academic problems.

1. Advise students on effective methods of time management.
2. Refer to university services as needed.
  - a. University Health Services
  - b. Speech and Hearing Clinic
  - c. Reading Improvement Service
  - d. Rehabilitation Service
  - e. Tutoring Service
  - f. Chairman of the Basic Home Economics Program
  - g. Chairman of Student Services in the Division of Home Economics

Objective: To provide assistance and advice with problems relating to study habits.

1. Discuss better arrangement of study time and place.
2. Assist with the following areas as needed.
  - a. Taking class notes.
  - b. Writing themes and reports.
  - c. Using the library.
  - d. Reading textbook materials.
  - e. Preparing for tests.
  - f. Organizing time and place for studying.
  - g. Giving oral reports.

### Phase III Career Information and Self Development (2 weeks)

Objective: To encourage the development of an individual's determination to fulfill educational and vocational aspirations.

1. Discuss careers in home economics related to the student's interests.
  - a. Provide literature as needed.
  - b. Secure additional literature from coordinator.
2. Provide students with information concerning pre-enrollment for summer session and/or the fall semester.
3. Assist with the selection of appropriate courses and teachers for the student's class schedule.
4. Conduct a tour of the home economics buildings and visit the various displays designed by the subject-matter areas.

Objective: To provide a person-to-person relationship which will provide emotional support and motivation.

1. Praise the student for improvements made during the program.
2. Help the student to develop a good concept of her abilities and herself.
3. Give encouragement to assist her in setting realistic goals, academic and social.

### Phase IV Evaluation (1 week)

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of a student-to-student assistance program.

Objective: To provide suggestions for improvement of the program and for the implementation of a similar program for future students.

Weekly meetings were held between the student assistants and the coordinator to discuss methods and techniques which could be used in assisting the participants. The program outline for the assistants also served to describe the content of the discussion meetings. A copy of the agenda of the weekly meetings was placed on page 38.

The student assistants met weekly with the coordinator in five different discussion groups. Two individual conferences were also

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

AGENDA OF WEEKLY MEETINGS

Week	Activity Description	Materials Used
1	<u>Organization of the Program:</u> Establishment of weekly meetings, assignment of participants to the student assistants, and meetings of assistants with the participants.	Information cards concerning participants.
2	<u>Objectives of the Program:</u> Discussion of various types of types of weekly contacts which could be made, weekly objectives, and use of log sheets.	Outline of Objectives Log Sheets OSU Student Handbook
3	<u>Social Activities:</u> Discussion of methods to use in acquainting students with activities on campus; informal rush, sororities, teas for international students, athletic events, recitals, musical and drama presentations.	OSU Spring Activities Schedule

Week	Activity Description	Materials Used
4	<p><u>Home Economics Organizations:</u>  Discussion of reasons students do not attend nor join home economics organizations, methods of encouraging students to join clubs, methods of helping participants to be more involved in club activities, and methods of promoting club activities.</p>	<p>Information concerning the meeting time and place of various home economics organizations.</p>
5 & 6	<p><u>Academic Adjustment:</u> Discussion concerning methods of advising students concerning management of time for studying, suggestions of developing better study habits, and services available on campus for assistance with tutoring.</p>	<p>Study Habits and Techniques.</p>
7 & 8	<p><u>Career Information:</u> Discussion of career information pertaining to all areas of home economics and requirements for majors.</p>	<p>Career pamphlets.  Degree Requirement Sheets.</p>
9	<p><u>Registration Materials:</u> Discussion of registration procedures for freshmen and sophomores for fall and summer sessions.</p>	<p>Registration packets.  Class Schedules.</p>

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Week	Activity Description	Materials Used
10	<u>Evaluation:</u> Discussion of methods of improving the program; evaluation of the methods used in the program, the materials used, and the services provided. Suggestions for the implementation of a similar program with future students.	Evaluation instruments.

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scheduled for two married student assistants who could not attend the group meetings. The purposes of these meetings were: 1) to provide opportunity for the student assistants to discuss methods and techniques useful in assisting the participants, 2) to allow the coordinator to relate pertinent information relative to the phases of the program, and 3) to distribute materials to the student assistants which were developed and collected for the program. These meetings were held in a classroom or in the coordinator's office, depending upon the size of the discussion group.

The first two weeks of the program were spent in organizing materials and orientating the student assistants to the objectives of the program and to their responsibilities. The assistants were given the names of their "little sisters" during the first week. The placement of the participants with the student assistants had been determined primarily by the participants' campus residence. Special effort was made to allow the out-of-state assistants and participants, as well as the married students, to become acquainted through this program. It was believed that the married assistants could share with the married participants their experiences concerning the organization of time, marital responsibilities, and social activities. The coordinator also believed that it would be very helpful to the student assistants if their "little sisters" lived in the same dormitory.

Each student assistant was given a folder of materials to be used during the program. The materials included: the outline of the student-to-student assistance program, a collection of information concerning study habits and techniques, log sheets, and a copy of the university's student handbook (see Appendix C). The student assistants



were asked to complete a log sheet pertaining to the weekly contacts with each "little sister." The log sheets were designed to provide:

- 1) information concerning the type of contact made, the type of assistance given, and the reason for the type of contact made;
- 2) information concerning materials which would have been helpful to the student assistant during the contact;
- and 3) information or materials needed from the coordinator by the student assistants in preparation for their next meeting with the participants.

The weekly log sheets were given to the coordinator during the weekly meetings.

During the next few weeks the assistants met with their "little sisters" helping them in whatever manner they could. The student assistants were encouraged to have some type of weekly contact with each participant. The contacts could be made by phone, personal visit, or both. The student assistants were encouraged to have as many personal visits as possible during the eight-week period. The amount of time spent with each participant was left to the discretion of the individual student assistant and would be determined according to: 1) the needs of the participants and the amount of assistance desired and 2) the amount of time the student assistants could spend helping each girl during the week. The important issue of the program, as decided by the student assistants and the coordinator, was to let each participant know that her "big sister" was willing to help her whenever she needed assistance.

The last week of the program was spent in evaluation. The coordinator held a conference with each student assistant. The participants were also contacted and conferences scheduled. Evaluation instruments were mailed to the participants who could not schedule a

conference. A brunch was also given by the coordinator for the assistants and their "little sisters" as an informal method of evaluating the program.

#### Summary

This chapter has presented the method and procedure used in developing the student-to-student assistance program. The objectives of the program were based upon the expressed need of the 60 participants. Upperclassmen serving as student assistants provided assistance to the participants and worked cooperatively with the coordinator in the identification of methods and techniques useful in assisting students. The program was designed to provide as much assistance as possible through the student assistants to help the participants with their concerns and adjustments to the university environment. The overall goal of the program was to strive to fulfill the needs of the participants and assist them in developing a rewarding and pleasurable college experience. The results of these efforts will be presented in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT-TO-STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The value of a student-to-student assistance program can only be determined by the persons who were involved in the program. This chapter will present the evaluations made by the participants, the student assistants, and the coordinator. The information presented in this chapter was gathered from the results of two evaluation instruments, one for the student assistants and one for the participants, and from the individual conferences held with each student who participated in the program. The last section of this chapter will present suggestions made by the participants and student assistants for the implementation of a similar program for future students.

#### Participation in the Program

##### Participants' Involvement

During the first few weeks of the program, fifteen of the participants indicated to the student assistants that they did not wish to continue in the program for the following reasons: five did not have time to meet weekly with the student assistants, five had made a decision concerning their major area of study in home economics and no longer felt that they needed to receive assistance, and five others had transferred from the division to other disciplines within the

university and were no longer interested in programs conducted by the division. Two students withdrew from the university. One student discontinued because of personal illness; the other, because of the illness of a family member.

Five participants were never contacted by the student assistants, three of whom did not reply to letters mailed to them by the student assistants concerning the program. The assistants had also made several attempts to contact these students by phone. Two students had moved from their dormitory residence and could not be located.

During the final phase of the program, six participants revealed that they had only seen their "big sister" once or twice during the whole program. Three stated that they had been too busy to meet regularly with the student assistants but later wished they had taken time to be in their rooms when the student assistant called or came by to visit with them. One participant was ill with the mumps and away from the university for a few weeks. She was, however, given assistance when she returned. The remaining two students had been neglected by their "big sister" after one or two visits. As a result of these findings, it became evident that 30 participants did receive assistance from their "big sisters" during the ten-week program.

#### Assistants' Involvement

The data tabulated from the log sheets indicated that the majority of the weekly contacts between the students varied from six to nine weeks depending upon the time of the initial contact. Several of the student assistants were not able to contact their "little sisters" until the second or third week of the program. Of the 26 upperclassmen who

volunteered to serve as student assistants, four did not participate throughout the whole program because of these reasons: 1) two upperclassmen were assigned to the participants who decided not to continue in the program, and 2) two upperclassmen found that they did not have time to meet weekly with the participants. The latter two assistants provided very little assistance to the four participants assigned to them and attended only a few of the group meetings with the coordinator. Fourteen student assistants were only able to participate for eight weeks during the program prior to their leaving the university for their student teaching experience. Therefore, a total of 22 upperclassmen provided assistance to 30 participants during the student-to-student assistance program.

The student assistants who were involved in the preparation for student teaching or who were major officers in the various home economics organizations had difficulty scheduling more of their time to provide assistance to their "little sisters." However, several of these assistants tried to have a weekly contact with the participants to see if assistance was needed. Many of the assistants and their "little sisters" exchanged weekly telephone calls to keep in contact with each other.

Of the 22 student assistants who continued in the program, only half had met weekly with the coordinator for a period of seven to ten weeks. Seven had met in individual or group meetings for the entire ten-week period. The student teachers had the most difficulty attending the meetings because of conflicting meetings and class schedules. Several of the student assistants would not attend the weekly meetings unless they had a specific question to ask the coordinator or if they

needed materials to use in helping the participants. However, the majority of the student assistants were very helpful to the coordinator in informing her when they were not able to attend a meeting. During the latter portion of the program, more of the student assistants began coming to the coordinator's office for individual conferences. This arrangement became easier for several students who could visit with the coordinator following one of their classes, rather than returning for a scheduled group meeting. The researcher often wondered how many of these girls accomplished as much as they did when they were involved in so many active programs.

#### Type of Assistance Provided

The student assistants found that several of the participants did not need to receive weekly assistance. Some of the participants only needed specific assistance with class scheduling or career information, while others needed information concerning the various campus activities and organizations within the Division of Home Economics. The majority of the assistance given pertained to: suggestions for the selection of a major, discussions concerning job opportunities within the various areas of home economics, and the selection of classes and teachers for the summer and fall sessions. Only a few of the student assistants reported that their "little sisters" had desired to receive assistance with the development of better study habits. The amount and type of assistance provided was totally dependent upon the individual needs of each participant.

A total of 210 personal contacts were made by telephone or in person with the participants by the 22 student assistants. Fifty-six

percent of the contacts were made through personal visits. These meetings were often held in the participants' dormitory rooms, the home economics buildings, the Student Union, or in the living quarters of the student assistants. Several of the participants and the student assistants attended activities together, such as athletic events, activities during Home Economics Week, Allied Arts Performances, meetings of home economics organizations, and other university activities. Five student assistants who were sorority members invited their "little sisters" to the sorority houses to become more familiar with Greek living and to become acquainted with other students. A similar activity was conducted by ten student assistants who had resided in one of the home management houses during the program.

Forty-four percent of the student contacts were made by telephone calls. The student assistants phoned the participants during the program to see if they needed any special assistance with their classwork or with problems, to schedule weekly meetings, or to provide information concerning various campus activities. Several of the student assistants had been resourceful in securing information and assistance for their "little sisters." The discussion meetings allowed the student assistants to share with each other ideas and techniques which they had found useful in assisting the participants. These meetings would often include discussions concerning methods of interpreting the home economics program, keeping the participants interested in their classes, and helping the participants to become involved in social activities and organizations.

Three student assistants had spoken to faculty members to see how they could provide assistance to the participants with their classwork.

Tutors were contacted from the university's tutoring service to assist two participants with their academic problems. Members of home economics organizations were asked to personally invite the participants to attend their club's meetings. Participants were introduced to upperclassmen majoring in various areas of home economics to provide more information concerning career opportunities. The married assistants were able to share with the married or engaged participants their experiences of being married and continuing in school. These illustrations were examples of the methods and techniques used in providing assistance to the participants. These efforts have shown the earnest intentions of several student assistants in providing assistance, information, and friendship to another student.

The 30 participants were asked, "In what ways do you feel the upperclassmen provided assistance to you?" These responses were given:

Information about campus activities and home economics clubs - 16 students  
 Assistance with study habits - 14 students  
 Assistance with registration materials and the selection of classes - 11 students  
 Someone I could talk to about ideas and events - 11 students  
 Information about majors and careers in home economics - 11 students  
 Helped me to understand more about the home economics program - 3 students  
 Gave me encouragement - 3 students.

Some examples of illustrations given by the participants were:

She made me feel that someone cared about me and what happened to me. She got me involved in SHEA and Freshman Club, also the activities of Home Economics Week. She talked to teachers about assignments I didn't understand. She helped me to learn how to study better. She gave me advice on what courses I should take and when. I don't know what I would have done without her.

She helped me in selecting my next semester classes. In fact, if she hadn't helped I probably wouldn't have known exactly what to take. She brought me information on different majors and helped me look at the advantages



and disadvantages of these majors for my personal needs. She called to find out how I was coming along with my schedule and was very concerned about me throughout the whole time of the program.

She told me not only about home economics programs and activities, but also about campus programs. If I had questions that she couldn't answer then, she took time to find out from another source.

Fourteen of the 30 participants received assistance with study habits. Most of the assistance given involved preparing for tests and organizing a time and place for study. A few students were provided assistance with taking class notes, reading textbook materials, and writing themes and reports. Only two students received assistance in using the library. Eight of the 30 participants stated that they had been satisfied with their study habits and did not need further assistance.

By the end of the program, 27 of the 30 participants had declared a major in a home economics area. Ten indicated that their "big sister" had been instrumental in their vocational decisions. Fifteen participants stated that they had selected their major prior to the beginning of the program. Three participants were still undecided about a major.

When asked, "In what ways could the upperclassmen have been more helpful to you?" the participants stated:

She would have helped more if we would have had the same major - 4 students  
 I needed her more first semester - 4 students  
 I needed more help with my studies and homework - 2 students  
 If she had more time to visit I would feel more informed - 2 students

The remaining students indicated that their "big sisters" had been very helpful to them. Examples of their comments were:

I feel my big sister did a great job and was as helpful as she could be!  
 She could not have been more helpful.

I don't think there was anything she overlooked in assisting me. She was really a great help.

### Evaluation by the Participants

#### Present College Concerns

The participants believed that the most valuable aspect of the student-to-student assistance program was the development of a friendship with an upperclassman. Information concerning the planned social activities on campus was rated as the most beneficial type of assistance given, followed by information relating to the home economics program. A comparison of the ratings given by the total and partial participants is presented in Table I. The total participants had six to ten weekly contacts with their "big sisters," while the partial participants had less than six weekly contacts. The statements rated more frequently under "some" by the total participants related to information about the home economics program and the home economics organizations. More of the partial participants received assistance with the development of an understanding of the home economics program and less assistance with the selection of a specific major. Only four total participants rated assistance with study habits as being of "most" value to them, but ten rated this assistance under "some." It was evident that the amount of time and assistance shared by the participants and the student assistants had a definite effect upon the value received from the program because the total participants more frequently checked "most" or "some" as the degree of value for the statements listed.

Additional comments made by the participants concerning the value

TABLE I  
 VALUE OF THE STUDENT-TO-STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BASED  
 UPON THE EVALUATION OF THE 25 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS\*  
 AND THE 5 PARTIAL PARTICIPANTS\*\*

Statement	Most		Some		Little		None	
	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P
Developing a new friend	22	2	3	2	0	1	0	0
Developing a friendship with an upperclassman	22	1	3	2	0	2	0	0
Gaining knowledge concerning planned social activities on campus	14	2	11	3	0	0	0	0
Developing an understanding of the purposes of the home economics clubs	7	0	13	1	5	2	0	2
Developing a broader understanding of the scope of home economics	7	0	15	4	3	1	0	0
Assistance with a decision concerning a specific major in home economics	5	0	10	2	8	3	2	0
Development of a clearer understanding of the requirements of a selected major	4	0	10	1	8	4	3	0
Development of new study habits and techniques	4	0	10	0	8	2	3	3

\*\* Partial participants = students who had less than six weekly contacts with student assistants.

\* Total participants = students who had six to ten weekly contacts with student assistants.

of the student-to-student assistance program were:

I enjoyed knowing someone in home economics to talk to about certain questions,

I met other people through my "big sister."

It's a good feeling knowing that someone cares about you.

It's important just to know someone to call when you have a small problem or question.

There was a very big chance that if I had not met my "big sister" I would not have decided to return in August.

I feel more a part of the home economics program now.

Why didn't you start this program last semester?

"Knowing that someone cares" was frequently mentioned to the coordinator during the conferences as one of the greatest values received from the program. The qualities of friendship developed between the participants and the student assistants proved to be one of the outstanding strengths of the student-to-student assistance program, on both the evaluation instruments and in the conferences.

In response to the question on the evaluation sheet relating to the relationship of the participants with their "big sisters," the majority of the total participants found the student assistants to "always" be understanding, informed, knowledgeable about the home economics clubs and careers, concerned about them as a person, and never a nuisance. The remaining total participants checked these same characteristics under the listing of "sometimes"; whereas, four out of five partial participants checked their responses to these same characteristics under "usually." The amount of contact between the students also seemed to be related to the attitudes developed toward the relationship.

In discussion with the coordinator, all of the 25 freshman participants stated that they had needed a "big sister" more during their first semester. The five sophomore participants indicated that they had volunteered in order to become more familiar with the total home economics program and to receive assistance with the selection of a major.

TABLE II  
 EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH UPPERCLASSMEN  
 BY THE 25 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS\* AND  
 THE 5 PARTIAL PARTICIPANTS\*\*

Statement	Always		Sometimes		Usually		Seldom		Never	
	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P
Understanding	24	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Informed about home economics	22	1	2	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
Person easy to talk to about ideas or problems	19	2	4	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Concerned about the person	19	1	3	0	3	4	0	0	0	0
Knowledgeable about home economics clubs	17	1	7	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
A nuisance	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	23	5

\*\* Partial - those who had less than six weekly contacts with upperclassmen.

\* Total - those who had six to ten weekly contacts with upperclassmen.

Twenty-five out of the total 30 participants were not disappointed with the program. Five stated that they wished they could have met more often with their "big sisters." One student commented: "No, I wasn't disappointed at all. I thought it might be a nuisance at the time I signed for it, but it turned out to be a great help."

In talking with the participants, the coordinator found that the majority believed they would have joined more organizations if they had had a "big sister" during the first semester. Several indicated that they would not have participated in many of the activities during the spring semester if they had not been encouraged by the student assistants. As the result of the relationship established with an

upperclassman serving as a "big sister," one freshman participant pledged the sorority of her "big sister" and another became a member of an honorary organization. Two participants became members of the Student Home Economics Association during the program, and three others indicated a desire to join the organization next year after learning more about the home economics clubs. One-fourth of the participants commented concerning the value of receiving the list of campus activities for the spring semester. Not only did the participants use the activity sheet for reference, but their friends, roommates, and associates also benefited from the information.

#### Future Educational Plans

Twenty-five of the 30 participants indicated on the evaluation sheet and to the coordinator that they planned to return to Oklahoma State University in the fall and major in home economics. Of the remaining five who were not returning, two were discontinuing their education to become employed, one was going to be married, one was transferring to another discipline, and the fifth girl was going to "stop out" of school for a year while she toured the United States with a religious organization. Six students indicated that they had considered withdrawing from the university during the fall semester. As a result of the student-to-student assistance program, these six students stated that they had become involved in student activities and felt more a part of the total home economics program and were definitely returning in the fall to major in home economics.

The last question on the evaluation instrument stated: "If the student-to-student assistance program is continued next year, would you

be willing to serve as a big sister?" Seventeen of the returning 25 answered "yes." Three were undecided and wanted to wait until their fall classes began to see if they would have time to participate, while five felt that they needed to learn more about the home economics program before they could help another student. Reasons given for the affirmative responses were:

I want to help and encourage others - 12 students  
I know how freshmen feel - 5 students  
It meant so much to me - 4 students  
I want to tell others about home economics - 3 students

#### Evaluation by the Student Assistants

##### Person-to-Person Relationships

Twenty-two upperclassmen participated in the student-to-student assistance program as student assistants by providing assistance to the 30 participants. The amount of assistance given and the amount of time which they contributed to the student-to-student assistance program has already been described in this chapter. The evaluation which follows was based upon the personal experiences of the student assistants.

The student assistants indicated that the opportunity of relating verbally their reasons for majoring in home economics to another student was the greatest value gained from the program. Twenty-one of the 22 assistants felt this way, while 15 also felt that they had been greatly helped to better understand the concepts of human relationships. Ten student assistants indicated that their participation in the developmental program had been of great value to them in clarifying their goals as home economists and in strengthening their professional commitment. Nine specified that working with their "little sisters" had helped them

to develop better qualities of being a good listener. Additional comments included on the evaluation instrument by the student assistants were:

It gave me a chance to see the problems students have and gave me an opportunity to figure out possible solutions. It served to provide examples of things I might encounter as a teacher.

I learned to be a friend as well as a counselor.

It helped me to realize the needs of some students and how they need encouragement and just someone to call on.

It helped me to let others know that they aren't the only ones who have ever encountered a particular frustration.

I learned more about the problems of beginning college students.

#### Usefulness of Materials Provided

##### to the Student Assistants

The student assistants were asked to rate the usefulness of the materials developed and collected for the program (see Table III). The most useful information provided pertained to: 1) information concerning the home economics clubs, organizations, and activities; and 2) information concerning the spring activities scheduled on the university campus. The home economics career pamphlets were also found to have been "very useful" by over one-half of the student assistants, while nearly as many found the weekly objectives to have been "very useful" or "useful." Ten students found the log sheets and the information concerning study habits to have been "very useful." Only one student assistant did not use the log sheets. Fourteen of the 22 student assistants found the discussion of guidance principles to have at least been "useful" in working with the participants. All of the materials were not used by each assistant because of the variation in the type of assistance needed by her "little sister." Nevertheless, it did appear



that the materials were well used by the majority of the student assistants.

TABLE III  
HELPFUL MATERIALS USED BY THE 22 STUDENT ASSISTANTS

Materials	Very Useful	Useful	Fairly Useful	Did Not Use
Information concerning club meetings and activities	15	5	2	0
OSU Spring Activities Sheet	12	8	2	0
Career Pamphlets	13	3	2	4
Outline of Weekly Objectives	10	10	2	0
Log Sheets	10	6	5	1
Study Habits and Techniques	10	6	2	4
Guidance Principles discussed	4	14	2	1

### The Role of the Coordinator

The student assistants were asked two questions pertaining to the coordinator on the evaluation instrument. The first question stated:

"In what ways did the coordinator provide assistance to you?" The answers were:

- Discussing methods and activities for helping the participants - 22 students
- Providing information about the home economics program and serving as a resource person - 14 students
- Helping me with my own problems and giving me encouragement - 10 students
- Being a friend - 1 student.

The second question asked: "How could the coordinator have been more helpful?" Twelve stated that no more assistance was needed, and eight

did not comment. Two believed that they had needed a longer orientation session with the coordinator at the beginning of the program.

#### Evaluation of the Role of the Coordinator

The amount of time spent organizing, conducting, and coordinating the student-to-student assistance program cannot be measured. Prior to the beginning of the program, the coordinator spent much time obtaining information useful for the development of the program. Materials were developed and duplicated, such as the guidelines for development of study habits, list of campus activities for the spring semester, log sheets, and list of weekly objectives. Organizational meetings were held with the upperclassmen to determine hours in which group discussion meetings were to be held.

The coordinator maintained office hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. four days a week to allow the student assistants to receive from the coordinator any assistance or materials needed in helping the participants. The coordinator spent four to five hours daily during several weeks preparing for the weekly discussion meetings, securing answers to the student assistants' questions, and conducting the weekly conference meetings. Seven discussion meetings were held each week with the student assistants. The coordinator kept records and made several tape recordings of the weekly conferences with the assistants. Records were kept concerning the information which the coordinator provided for the assistants and the information which she was requested to secure for them.

As the student-to-student assistance program progressed, it became evident that there was a lack of organization within the structure of

the departmental clubs. Communication concerning the meeting dates and scheduled programs of the seven home economics organizations was very poor. Only one departmental club had printed any materials listing the monthly meetings and the content of the scheduled programs. The student assistants who were not members of the Student Home Economics Association or departmental clubs and several who were members needed more information concerning the home economics organizations and their activities than those who were actively involved in the organizations.

The assistants also needed more specific information concerning career opportunities in home economics areas, especially home economics and journalism, home management, and home economics and business. Other information needed included: degree requirements for the subject-matter areas; information concerning out-of-state residency, correspondence courses, and methods used by participants in declaring a major; and special information about sororities, honorary organizations, and military organizations for women at Oklahoma State University. Interviews were held with university personnel in the Office of Student Affairs concerning these matters. The Chairman of the Basic Home Economics Program and the Chairman of Student Services in Home Economics were very helpful in providing information concerning the home economics programs, the home economics organizations, and general information concerning the university.

The coordinator served as a resource person throughout the program to whom the assistants could come with their questions or problems relevant to the needs of the participants. The coordinator not only provided assistance to the upperclassmen with suggestions for working with the participants, but she also provided assistance to the

upperclassmen with their own personal problems and class assignments. It seemed very important to several of the student assistants to be able to discuss their problems with a graduate student and to receive encouragement and assistance when college life became strenuous for them. All students need encouragement and praise, regardless of their classification.

The majority of the student assistants were very resourceful and interested in helping their "little sisters." The weekly meetings were important to the student assistants who needed suggestions and materials; however, not every student assistant needed to meet weekly with the coordinator. The coordinator found the student assistants to be very willing to provide as much assistance to the participants as their schedules would allow and to work cooperatively with the coordinator in the development of the program. It was, however, very important for the coordinator to be available when the student assistants needed information, materials, or advice.

A brunch was held at the end of the program for the participants and student assistants. Although only a few were able to attend, the results did indicate the value of having a social affair where all the participants and the student assistants could become acquainted and share experiences. The coordinator met with the 22 student assistants and 25 of the 30 participants in evaluation conferences. The five participants who were unable to schedule a conference were mailed an evaluation instrument and conducted an oral evaluation of the program through a telephone conversation with the coordinator.

The role of the coordinator required many hours of work in preparation, coordination, and evaluation of the developmental program, but

a coordinator must keep the program organized and functioning if its objectives are to be achieved and students are assisted. The results of these efforts have provided more insight into the needs of entering students and in the implementation of a similar program for future students.

### Suggestions for the Implementation of a Similar Program

#### Timing of the Program

An important part of the development of a student-to-student assistance program was the production of suggestions by the student assistants and the participants concerning a similar program to be initiated for future students. The participants and student assistants unanimously agreed that such a program should be initiated at the beginning of the school year in August. Twenty of the 30 participants also indicated that freshmen need the assistance of a "big sister" during the whole year. The 22 student assistants highly recommended that transfer students--freshmen, sophomores, or juniors--should also be included in a student-to-student assistance program when they enter Oklahoma State University from another institution.

#### Method of Initial Contact

It was interesting to compare the responses of the student assistants and the participants to the question referring to the best method to use in acquainting entering students with their "big sisters." Twenty of the 30 participants and five of the 22 student assistants believed that two methods should be employed: 1) letters written during

the summer by the student assistants to the entering students to become acquainted before meeting each other on the university campus and 2) a get-acquainted party held at the beginning of the program. Twice as many of the participants and student assistants felt that a party would be a better method of acquainting students with their "big sisters" than the use of letters only.

#### Role of Student Assistants

The student assistants, especially those who were engaged in the student teaching block, believed that juniors and sophomores would have more time to serve as "big sisters." The student assistants were divided concerning the number of meetings needed to be held each month between the student assistants and the coordinator. Nine indicated once a week, while an equal number indicated every two weeks. Four assistants believed that once a month was sufficient.

Over sixty percent of the student assistants believed that a more extensive orientation program was needed at the beginning of a student-to-student assistance program for upperclassmen who will be working with entering students. In the developmental program, information concerning the home economics programs and university services was provided during the weekly meetings as the program progressed. The student assistants believed that it would have been more helpful if the information had been presented earlier because of the variation of assistance needed by the participants. Several student assistants suggested that a handbook should be developed for "big sisters" containing the information which was used in the developmental program.

The assistants were asked to indicate the type of weekly meeting--

group or individual conference with the coordinator--they had found more beneficial for them. All but two of the 22 student assistants had experienced both types of meetings. Eleven student assistants felt that the individual conferences were more helpful, while ten considered both to have been beneficial to them. The group meetings, according to twelve student assistants, provided opportunity for the sharing of ideas and the discussion of student problems. Fifteen commented that the individual conferences provided more opportunity to discuss specific and personal problems with the coordinator. Thus, it appeared that both the individual conferences and the group meetings had been helpful to the student assistants. The majority of the student assistants commented that they believed more group meetings would be needed at the beginning of a program. The individual conferences could be held as often as the "big sisters" needed information or materials from the coordinator.

#### Needs of Entering Students

In order to develop a format for a program designed to assist entering students, it would be very important to identify their special needs. The participants were asked to rate twelve items according to the degree which they felt those items hindered a student from enjoying college life and making adjustments to the university program. The statement which received the highest rating was "insufficient preparation in high school." Indecisiveness concerning a college major and/or a career received the second highest number of markings. Fifteen of the 30 participants felt that the development of a personal relationship with an adviser or faculty member was very important to freshman

students, The size and content of classes, according to some participants, were discouraging to students as illustrated in Table IV. Financial difficulties and college registration procedures received the lowest ratings.

In discussion with the coordinator, the participants listed these activities as being needed by entering students:

Knowledge about what materials to bring to college.

Opportunity to have informal social contacts with other freshmen.

Opportunity to meet more people.

An acquaintance with an upperclassman who will invite them to go to activities and meetings so that freshman will not have to go alone.

A guided tour of the campus to become familiar with the location of their classes.

One question on the evaluation instrument asked the participants:

"In what ways do you feel the faculty could assist freshmen and transfer students in making adjustments to college life?" Twelve participants, or 40 percent, commented that a more "personal relationship needs to be developed between faculty and students." Seven, or 23 percent, referred to the need of students to have a permanent adviser with whom one could develop a closer relationship. It appeared from the comments given by the 30 participants who were freshmen and sophomores that several yearned for a more personal relationship with an adult, especially within the Division of Home Economics.

#### Amount of Contact Needed Between Students

The majority of the 22 student assistants felt that upperclassmen serving as "big sisters" should contact their "little sisters" at least once a week, while the remaining students felt that every two weeks would be sufficient. On the other hand, the 30 participants were



TABLE IV  
NEEDS OF ENTERING STUDENTS EXPRESSED BY 30 PARTICIPANTS

Student Needs	Much	Some	Little	None
Insufficient preparation in high school for college work	20	7	3	0
Indecisiveness concerning a college major and/or a career	16	13	1	0
Lack of personal relationship with an adviser or faculty member with whom one could discuss academic as well as personal problems	15	12	3	0
Required courses which seem dull and boring	13	13	4	0
Classes which are too large to enable the student to receive individual assistance	12	11	4	3
Unfamiliarity with total campus activities	10	13	7	0
Making adjustments of being away from family and friends	9	14	5	2
Difficulty in making new friendships	9	11	10	0
Too heavy a credit load during the first semester	9	11	8	2
College registration procedures	5	12	10	3
Financial problems	4	6	15	5

divided concerning the amount of contact needed. Thirteen participants felt that they had needed to have personal contact with their "big sisters" once a week, while twelve felt that every two weeks and whenever needed would be an appropriate arrangement. Five participants believed that contact between the students was only needed when the "little sisters" had a question or a problem.

#### Summary

This chapter has presented an evaluation of the student-to-student assistance program made by the participants, student assistants, and the coordinator. The results have shown that such a program was useful not only to the students who were given assistance, but also to those who provided the assistance. One of the greatest strengths of the program was the personal feelings developed between the participants and the student assistants. The participants developed a friendship with an upperclassman and became aware that someone really did care about them. Similarly, a reciprocal attitude was expressed by the student assistants who believed that their participation in helping another student had benefited them by allowing them to express verbally their professional goals and to become more committed to their vocational aspirations.

The program also revealed weaknesses in its structure and organization. The student assistants needed to have had a longer orientation session at the beginning of the program to the services of the university and the organization of home economics programs and clubs. A better method of acquainting students with each other was needed, for several students spent many hours attempting to locate the participants.

The type of assistance provided was related to these areas: social, academic, career, and personal. Ten students were directly benefited from the program by receiving assistance with the selection of a college major, while six students who had considered dropping out of college had been assisted and made to feel more a part of the university environment.

Materials were developed and gathered for the program, and almost everything used in helping the participants had been useful to the majority of the student assistants. Suggestions and recommendations have been made for the implementation of a similar program with future students.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify certain methods and techniques useful in a program designed to increase the retention rate of home economics students by providing student-to-student assistance. A review of literature was made concerning student attrition in colleges and universities to identify specific problems and needs of college students. Information collected concerning retention programs in various institutions provided ideas and suggestions for the development of a program designed to assist students in making adjustment to the college environment.

A developmental program was conducted for a ten-week period during the 1973 spring semester within the Division of Home Economics at Oklahoma State University. Twenty-two upperclassmen assisted 25 freshman and five sophomore students in making adjustments to the college environment by providing information relating to the home economics program, careers in home economics, study techniques, campus activities, and university services. Resource materials were developed and collected for use during the program. The student assistants worked cooperatively with a coordinator in developing methods and techniques useful for providing assistance to students. Recommendations were made

for the implementation of a similar program with future students.

### Conclusions

The effectiveness of a student-to-student assistance program could only be determined by the value which it had to the individuals involved. College students were given a brief orientation to the university environment and then were left to use their own resources making adjustments to college life. To some, college was a "foreign land," filled with new experiences and new faces. Not every student needed or desired assistance during the program, but some students needed to know that someone cared about them as individuals. The results of this program have shown that a person-to-person relationship between college students who speak the same language and share the same problems was a practical and useful method of helping several students adjust to college life. College students can and do educate one another. These findings were very similar to the results of the studies conducted at Southwest Texas State College (5, 6, 45).

The greatest value of the developmental program was that it did provide for the majority of the participants a friendship with an upperclassman who could assist them with small problems and answer questions which they might have concerning vocational decisions, personal matters, or university policies. The upperclassmen who served as "big sisters" were also benefited by working with another student. Several student assistants indicated the value of being able to express verbally their professional goals and to become more committed to their vocational objectives.

The coordinator was disappointed when several of the participants

decided not to continue in the program. Yet, one should understand the hesitancy of individuals to become involved in a new program when they are uncertain of its composition and organization. Although the program was conducted during the spring semester, the response of students who desired to receive assistance indicated that freshman students need and desire assistance throughout the whole first year.

Six students who had previously considered withdrawing from the university were benefited from the association with an upperclassman who had helped them to become more familiar with the opportunities for growth and service within the university environment. The program was instrumental in increasing the survival rate of these six students.

Every student who participated in the program believed in its value to entering freshmen and students who transfer to the university from other institutions. The fact that the program will be continued speaks well for its acceptance among home economics students. The student-to-student assistance program was chosen by the Home Economics Student Council as a project worth continuing. Plans were made for its implementation with entering students in the 1973 fall semester. The chairman of the "Big Sister Program," as it will be called, served as a student assistant in this thesis study; the two co-chairmen were participants. Over sixty upperclassmen in the Division of Home Economics volunteered to serve as "big sisters" in the 1973-74 program. The coordinator assisted in the development of this expanded program.

One of the primary purposes of the developmental study was to identify techniques and procedures useful in providing assistance to students. Materials have been developed and assembled which were proven useful. The program illustrated that senior Home Economics Education

majors preparing for their student teaching experience and living in the home management houses simultaneously and major officers in organizations do not have as much time as sophomores and juniors might have to serve as "big sisters."

An important strength shown in this research study was that upperclassmen were interested in the retention of students within the Division of Home Economics as well as within the institution. It can be concluded that a student-to-student assistance program was one method which was practical and useful in assisting several students to make adjustments to the college environment and in developing personal commitment to the profession of home economics.

#### Recommendations

On the basis of the analysis of the results of this study, the following recommendations were proposed by the researcher for providing assistance to home economics students.

1. A student-to-student assistance program should be expanded within the Division of Home Economics to include males in all majors including those enrolled in the School of Hotel and Restaurant Association.
2. More information about career opportunities should be made available to entering students. Freshmen need to have more contact with upperclassmen majoring in various areas of home economics and with employed home economists. It seemed apparent that students need more guidance in the selection of a major and in the development of an understanding of the wide range of employment possibilities available to women in home economics.

3. A study should be made to determine why students enter home economics and later transfer to other disciplines.

4. Faculty members should strive to provide more personal relationships with entering students.

5. An information booklet should be developed and printed concerning the home economics organizations including their meeting dates and programs.

6. More information should be obtained from students when they enter college concerning their future marital plans, anticipated financial situation, and expected number of years they will be students in the university. This data could be used in planning a student's schedule to best meet her needs during the anticipated length of time she will remain in the institution.

7. All home economics classes which are commonly attended by freshmen should be studied to determine their appropriateness in the instruction of students who may not persist beyond their first year. Special courses should be developed, without prerequisites, designed to provide preparation for the dual roles of homemaker and wage-earner useful for all stages of life.



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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET

As a part of a research project, a graduate student in Home Economics Education would like to develop a program in which upperclassmen would have informal contacts with freshmen students to answer questions and/or give assistance.

How could an upperclassman help you now in your college life to answer questions or give assistance?

A special program will be organized next semester to assist freshmen. Opportunity will be provided for you to meet upperclassmen and receive help with any of the problems which you have listed above. These contacts might require one hour a week of your time. Would you be willing to participate in this research project for the second semester?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Campus Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Hometown \_\_\_\_\_ Classification:

Freshman \_\_\_\_\_

Sophomore \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

REASONS FOR GOING TO COLLEGE

TABLE V  
 REASONS FOR GOING TO COLLEGE GIVEN BY 60 PARTICIPANTS  
 BY DEGREE OF INFLUENCE

Classification of Reasons	Most		Some		Little		None	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Career:</b>								
I felt that a college education was needed for the kind of work I wanted to do.	46	76	10	16	4	7	0	0
I wanted to obtain a job with a higher salary than I could have obtained with only a high school diploma.	44	73	10	16	6	10	0	0
I wanted to develop competent skills useful for employment during the various stages of life.	38	63	19	31	3	5	0	0
I wanted to prepare myself for the dual role of homemaker and wage-earner.	24	40	23	38	11	18	2	3
I have always wanted to become a professional home economist.	14	23	22	36	15	25	9	15
I wanted to explore several areas of home economics to see which area I would desire to pursue as a career.	14	23	14	23	20	33	12	20
<b>Academic:</b>								
I wanted to broaden my education to include a greater appreciation and understanding of the cultural aspects of today's society.	28	46	25	41	7	11	0	0
I thought that I could be a better homemaker, wife and mother if I had preparation in home economics.	23	38	11	18	20	33	6	10
I enjoyed studying and wanted to continue academic work.	10	16	21	35	23	38	6	10



TABLE V (Continued)

Classification of Reasons	Most		Some		Little		None	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Personal:</b>								
I wanted to acquire knowledge and values which would contribute to a more satisfying marriage and family life.	28	46	16	26	15	25	1	1
I hoped to make new friends in college.	26	43	23	38	9	15	2	3
I wanted to be able to make a lot of money after I had graduated.	12	20	33	55	14	23	1	1
I thought that college would be a good place to meet the type of person I would want to marry.	8	13	15	25	23	38	14	23
I wanted to become a member of a sorority.	4	6	4	6	10	16	42	70
<b>Traditional:</b>								
Most of my friends were going to college.	12	20	12	20	21	35	15	35
My teachers encouraged me to continue my education.	7	11	30	50	18	30	5	8
My older brothers and/or sisters had gone to college.	7	11	12	20	6	10	35	58
I had received a scholarship.	5	8	3	5	6	10	46	76
My parents insisted on my going to college.	3	5	16	26	14	23	27	45
Business, church and/or community leaders encouraged me to go to college.	2	3	19	31	23	38	16	26
<b>Civic:</b>								
I wanted to be able to contribute as an educated citizen to civic and community activities.	19	31	26	43	14	23	1	1
I felt that a college degree would enable me to be more influential in community affairs.	11	18	25	41	17	28	7	11
I wanted to become more knowledgeable about the political organizations of our government.	2	3	20	33	21	35	16	26

APPENDIX C

MATERIALS USED DURING PROGRAM

## LOG SHEET

STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF CONTACT MADE:

\_\_\_\_\_ telephone  
 \_\_\_\_\_ personal contact  
 \_\_\_\_\_ both

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION PERIOD:

\_\_\_\_\_ personal  
 \_\_\_\_\_ academic  
 \_\_\_\_\_ career oriented  
 \_\_\_\_\_ social

COMMENTS: (Reasons given for  
 selection of meeting  
 place and type of  
 contact made)

COMMENTS: (What type of problems  
 were discussed? questions  
 asked? etc.)

ASSISTANCE GIVEN: (How did you help the student?)

INFORMATION WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN HELPFUL FOR USE DURING THIS MEETING:

INFORMATION NEEDED IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

---

 Student Assistant

## ESTABLISHMENT OF STUDY HABITS AND TECHNIQUES

Study habits and techniques have to be cultivated and developed. Some suggestions for the development of good study habits follow.

1. Find a comfortable place to study. Avoid an atmosphere filled with distracting elements or uncontrollable noise.
2. Develop a strong desire to master your studies. Develop meaningful goals and establish strong methods of accomplishing these goals.
3. Avoid becoming behind in a subject. Keep up with daily assignments. Plan ahead for the preparation of library assignments.
4. Concentrate on the subject. Avoid tendencies to day-dream, allow the mind to wander, or to procrastinate.
5. Develop interest in your subjects. Utilize the information you have learned and try to make it relevant to matters of concern to you.
6. Maintain a study schedule. Most professors recommend two hours of preparation for each hour of class.
7. A healthy mind and body are important in successfully achieving one's potential. Regular meals under pleasant conditions will increase efficiency. A well-balanced daily program includes exercise and recreation.
8. Include time in your plans for campus activities, clubs, and so forth. These activities should be planned in harmony with your study schedule to be able to successfully achieve the academic requirements of the university. Make your college experience a rewarding, enjoyable adventure.

### Notetaking

1. If possible, write in ink. Pencil marks blur badly and eventually become illegible.
2. Write plainly. Do not try to take down everything the professor says. If you do not have time to make complete sentences, put down enough so that you can complete the sentence after the lecture.

3. Avoid letting your notes be separate from each other. Establish a system for storing your notes for each class.
4. Keep your mind on the lecture. Do not get so involved in the taking of your notes that you miss the point the speaker is making.
5. Try to develop the habit of arranging your notes in outline form. Adopt some device that means something to you and stick to it.
6. Try to read them as soon as possible and complete any parts you have omitted.

#### Reading Textbook Materials

1. Think about the topic of study before beginning to read. Review notes and suggestions made by the professor concerning the reading materials.
2. Read rapidly through your assignment first to establish an overview of the material.
3. Observe the headings in each chapter during the second, more precise reading. Chapter headings indicate important points.
4. Paragraphs have topic and summary sentences at the beginning and end. Important statements are often italicized. Noticing these points when reading will assist in the comprehension of the materials.
5. After reading the paragraph, stop and reconsider the message read. Certain important points may need to be reread for clarity and understanding.
6. Taking notes or marking important statements in the book is a method of reinforcing the learning process and enabling the reader to draw upon the important passages or terms during another reading or review. Charts, graphs, and maps present important materials and should be studied.

#### Paper Writing

1. Decide upon a topic that is of interest to you and one in which information is available for study within the materials found in the university library.

2. Become knowledgeable concerning the topic.
3. Make an outline. Organize materials into patterns of relationships. Make a list of important facts to be used.
4. Refer to an English textbook for the proper use of punctuation marks, grammar, and so forth.
5. Prepare a bibliography for your paper, if applicable.
6. If possible, type or have the paper typed. Make sure your paper is neat and free from grammatical errors or misspellings.

#### Studying for Exams

1. Review the main topics. Keep active and alert during the study process. Review early and prevent last minute cramming.
2. Underline your notes with colored ink to emphasize important facts.
3. Try to answer questions listed at the end of a chapter or questions which you might have made from your notes. Try to frame questions which you consider important and would ask if you were the teacher. Be sure you can answer the questions.
4. Discuss the subject with other students. Ask each other questions. Try to find answers for questions which you do not understand or doubt the validity of your ideas.
5. Consider the type of exam which the instructor has indicated to be the nature of the test, i.e. true-false, multiple-choice, discussion, and so forth. Make sure that you have understood the amount of material which will be covered on the exam.
6. Get plenty of sleep before taking an exam. Review materials briefly before taking the exam to refresh your thoughts concerning the important points.

#### Taking Exams

1. When entering for an exam, try to remain calm. Avoid last minute cramming of materials which may only lead to frustration or confusion.

2. Read carefully all directions given for the exam before beginning. Read each question carefully before beginning to answer it.
3. If you do not know the answer to a question, try to reason it out. If you are stumped on this question, skip it and go on to others so that the time element will not escape and prevent you from answering questions which you do know.
4. Before handing in an exam paper, carefully read over each question and answer. Minor errors are often detected in the final reading.

Source:

Phillips, Velma. Home Economics Careers for You. Second edition.  
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962.

APPENDIX D

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS



## STUDENT-TO-STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EVALUATION

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the value of the student-to-student assistance program to the students who served as participants. Please answer the following questions based upon your experience and participation in this program.

	<u>Much</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>None</u>
1. Of what value was the student-to-student assistance program to you as a student in developing:				
a. A broader understanding of the scope of home economics?	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. New habits and techniques for studying?	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. A friendship with an upperclassman with whom you could share ideas and concerns relating to the home economics program.	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Knowledge concerning planned social activities on campus?	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. A decision concerning a specific major in home economics (HEED, GTM, etc.)?	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. A clearer understanding of the requirements of your selected major?	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. An understanding of the home economics clubs, their purposes and goals?	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. A new friend?	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Others (Please write in):	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Place a check beside any of the following topics in which you received some assistance.				
Taking class notes	_____			
Writing themes and reports	_____			
Using the library	_____			
Reading textbook material	_____			
Preparing for tests	_____			
Organizing time and place for study	_____			
Giving oral reports	_____			
Others (Please specify):	_____			
_____	_____			
_____	_____			

3. How often do you feel you needed to have personal contact with your "Big Sister"? Please check one response.

Once a week \_\_\_\_\_  
 Every two weeks \_\_\_\_\_  
 Once a month \_\_\_\_\_  
 Whenever I had a  
 question or problem \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other suggestions? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Many freshmen do not enjoy their first year at Oklahoma State University as much as they do the latter years. Rate the following items according to the degree to which you feel these items hinder a student from enjoying college life and making adjustments to the university program.

	<u>Much</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>None</u>
a. College registration procedures	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Insufficient preparation in high school for college work	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Indecisiveness concerning a college major and/or a career	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Making adjustments of being away from family and friends	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Unfamiliarity with total campus activities	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Difficulty in making new friendships	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Lack of personal relationship with an adviser or faculty member with whom one could discuss academic as well as personal problems	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Too heavy a credit load during the first semester	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Required courses which seem dull and boring	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Classes which are too large to enable the student to receive individual assistance	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Financial problems	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. Difficulty in finding enough time to study and to enjoy personal activities	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. At what time during the school year do you feel a freshman needs the assistance of a "Big Sister"? Check one or any of the following items.

At the beginning of the school year in August \_\_\_\_\_  
 At the beginning of the second semester \_\_\_\_\_

During the whole year \_\_\_\_\_  
 No assistance is needed at any time \_\_\_\_\_

6. Check one answer to each of the following items according to your beliefs about the initial meeting between freshmen or transfer students with an upperclassman who would serve as their "Big Sister."

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Sure</u>
a. Letters written during the summer to become acquainted before meeting each other on campus	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. A get-acquainted party at the beginning of the program	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. A telephone call is adequate	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. A personal visit is an effective method of becoming acquainted	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Other (Please specify): _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Check one answer to each question regarding how you found the upperclassman to be in her relationship with you.

	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
a. Understanding	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Informed about the home economics program	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Knowledgeable concerning the home economics clubs and activities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. A person with whom you could easily discuss ideas and/or problems	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Concerned about you as a person	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. A nuisance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. In what ways do you feel the upperclassman provided assistance to you?

9. In what ways could the upperclassman have been more helpful to you?

10. Were you disappointed in the program? If so, how?
11. In what ways do you feel the faculty could assist freshmen and transfer students in making adjustments to college life?
12. Have you made a decision concerning a major area of study in home economics?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_
- a. If yes, in what area do you plan to major? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. If yes, did your "Big Sister" help you in making this decision by providing useful information or suggestions?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_
13. Are you a member of a home economics club?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_
- a. If you are, please list the club or clubs in which you are a member.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- b. If you are not a member of a home economics club, please indicate the reason for not joining a club.
14. What are your plans concerning your education? Place a check beside the information which best describes your anticipated plans.
- Plan to return to OSU in August and major in home economics \_\_\_\_\_
- Plan to return to OSU in August and transfer to another college \_\_\_\_\_
- Plan to transfer to another institution and major in home economics \_\_\_\_\_
- Plan to transfer to another institution and change my major \_\_\_\_\_
- Plan to discontinue my education and obtain employment \_\_\_\_\_
- Plan to become married and discontinue my education \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

15. If the student-to-student assistance program is continued next year, would you be willing to serve as a "Big Sister"?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Why or Why Not?

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please answer the following questions based upon your participation as an assistant in the student-to-student assistance program. Check your answers according to the following scale:

Much -- if this was of great value;  
Some -- if this was of medium value;  
Little -- if this was of slight value;  
None -- if this was of no value.

	<u>Much</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>None</u>
1. Of what value is a student-to-student assistance program to:				
a. freshman students entering college?	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. students who are undecided concerning the selection of a major area of study?	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. students who transfer from another college or university to OSU?	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. students who have transferred from another college at OSU to the College of Home Economics?	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. the Division of Home Economics in the retention of students?	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Of what value was the assistance which you gave to the girl or girls with whom you have worked in the presentation of materials concerning the total home economics program, specific areas of study, and the home economics clubs?				
a. For girl A? _____ (name)	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. For girl B? _____ (name)	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Of what value to you was the student-to-student relationship with freshmen and sophomores in the clarification of your goals as a home economist and in the strengthening of your professional commitment?	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Of what value would an orientation program concerning registration requirements, the planned programs within the division, and the home economics clubs and their activities be to upperclassmen involved in a student-to-student assistance program prior to its initiation?	_____	_____	_____	_____

	<u>Much</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>None</u>
6. Of what value has this experience been to you serving as a "Big Sister" in developing:				
a. a broader understanding of the scope of home economics?	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. a basic understanding of the home economics clubs?	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. the qualities of being a good listener?	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. new concepts in the development of human relationships?	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. opportunities to relate your reasons for majoring in home economics verbally to others?	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Others? (Please specify) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____				
_____				

Place a check by the one response which you feel is best,

7. At what time during the school year would a student-to-student assistance program best serve the needs of students?
- \_\_\_ at the beginning of the school year in August
- \_\_\_ at the beginning of the second semester in January
8. Which type of initial contact would best serve to acquaint freshman, sophomore, and/or transfer students with the student-to-student assistance program and with their "Big Sisters"?
- \_\_\_ letters written to these students by the "Big Sisters" during the summer
- \_\_\_ a get-acquainted party at the beginning of the program
- \_\_\_ a telephone call by the upperclassmen to the student
- \_\_\_ other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
9. How often does an upperclassmen need to contact a little sister during the program?
- \_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_ every two weeks
- \_\_\_ once a month
- \_\_\_ prior to special home economics meetings and/or activities
- Other suggestions? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

10. How often should an upperclassman meet with the coordinator for regular scheduled meetings?
- once a week
- every two weeks
- once a month
- Other suggestions? \_\_\_\_\_

11. In which of the following classifications do you feel a student would have more time to serve as a "Big Sister"?
- sophomore
- junior
- senior during student teaching block
- senior not during student teaching block

12. After having worked with these students, what conclusions have you drawn concerning their desires to continue within the Division of Home Economics at OSU? If you worked with only one student, place your conclusions about her desires under student A.

Girl A      Girl B

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | desires to continue in home economics at OSU                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | desires to transfer to another institution but continue in home economics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | desires to transfer to another college at OSU                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | desires to discontinue her education completely                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | indecisive concerning future plans  |

Check as many of the following responses as you feel are relevant to the following questions.

13. In which of the following areas do you feel entering students need the most assistance?

career decisions       academic       social

14. Evaluate the usefulness of the materials given to you by the coordinator,

	Very Useful	Fairly Useful	Did Not Use
a. Outline of weekly objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Study habits and techniques information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Career pamphlets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Information concerning club meetings and activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





2

VITA

Linda Ann Dismuke

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

**Thesis:** THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STUDENT-TO-STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR FEMALE HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Major Field:** Home Economics Education

**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, July 5, 1946, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Dismuke.

**Education:** Graduated from Lonoke High School, Lonoke, Arkansas, in May, 1964; received Bachelor of Science degree from Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, May, 1968; attended University of Arkansas; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1973.

**Professional Experience:** Vocational home economics teacher at Jonesboro High School, Jonesboro, Arkansas, from August, 1968, to June, 1972.

**Professional Organizations:** American Home Economics Association, Arkansas Home Economics Association, Omicron Nu, Phi Upsilon Omicron,