

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY – OKLAHOMA CITY
PROBATIONARY STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
AND THE EFFECT OF A STUDENT SUCCESS
COURSE ON GRADE POINT
AVERAGE

By

JO ELLA FIELDS

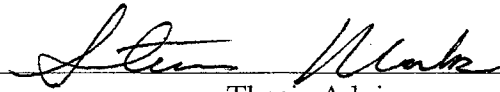
Bachelor of Science
University of Central Oklahoma State
Edmond, Oklahoma State University
1986

Master of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1992

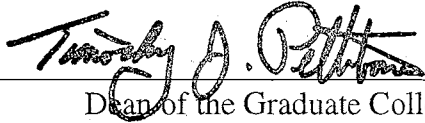
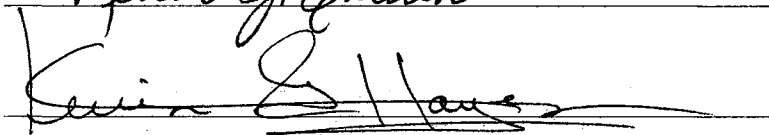
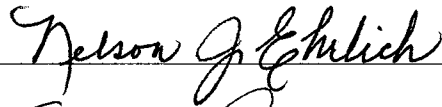
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
May, 2002

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY – OKLAHOMA CITY
PROBATIONARY STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
AND THE EFFECT OF A STUDENT SUCCESS
COURSE ON GRADE POINT
AVERAGE

Thesis Approved:



Thesis Adviser



Dean of the Graduate College

FOR MY MOTHER, ELLA PAULINE RUSH,
AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY FATHER,
JOHN HENRY RUSH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research project could not have been completed without the help and encouragement from many wonderful individuals. I would like to thank Dr. Bill Nelson, who from the very beginning of the process, provided words of support and confidence in my abilities to meet the challenge. A thanks to my two colleagues, Dr. Mike DeLong and Dr. Lesia Strong for convincing me to begin the process, saying “it will be fun!” A special thanks to my mother-in-law, Dr. Mona Fields, for sharing her knowledge and inspiration. Thank you to the members of my committee, Dr. Steve Marks, Dr. Mary Kutz, Dr. Nelson Ehrlich and Dr. Kevin Hayes, who provided invaluable support and help.

I would also like to thank Joy Wieland and Rose Beam for helping me with the computer software challenges I encountered, and Marcus Burgess and Rod Stewart who provided computer support.

A very special thank you to my friends and family, especially my husband James, my sons, Christopher, Matthew, Joseph and Andrew, my daughters-in-law, and my grandchildren for their patience, understanding and words of encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|--|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Background | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem | 3 |
| Purpose of the Study | 5 |
| Significance of the Study | 5 |
| Research Questions | 6 |
| Limitations | 7 |
| Definition of Terms | 7 |
| Scope of the Study | 9 |
| II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE | 10 |
| Introduction | 10 |
| Community Colleges Demographics | 11 |
| OSU-Oklahoma City Demographics | 14 |
| Community College Admission Policies and Retention Strategies | 16 |
| OSU-Oklahoma City Admission Policies and Retention Strategies | 34 |
| Intervention Strategies | 41 |
| OSU-Oklahoma City Intervention Strategies | 47 |
| OSU-Oklahoma City Student Success Strategies | 50 |
| III. METHODOLOGY | 58 |
| Introduction | 58 |
| Statement of the Problem | 59 |
| Purpose of the Study | 60 |
| Hypotheses | 61 |
| Research Questions | 62 |
| Population | 63 |
| Sample | 63 |
| Data Collection | 64 |
| Institutional Review Board | 65 |
| Data Analysis | 66 |

| Chapter | Page |
|--|------|
| IV. FINDINGS..... | 67 |
| Introduction..... | 67 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 67 |
| Purpose of the Study | 67 |
| Hypotheses..... | 68 |
| Research Questions..... | 68 |
| OSU-Oklahoma City Demographics | 69 |
| V. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS..... | 86 |
| Introduction..... | 86 |
| Purpose of the Study | 86 |
| Hypotheses..... | 87 |
| Research Questions..... | 87 |
| Summary of the Findings..... | 88 |
| Conclusions..... | 89 |
| Recommendations..... | 90 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 93 |
| APPENDIX – INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM..... | 102 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|---|------|
| I. Feeder High Schools of OSU-OKC Probationary Students – Year 2000 | 71 |
| II. Originating Colleges and Universities | 74 |
| III. Grade Distribution | 76 |
| IV. Grade Distribution by Gender – Spring, Summer, Fall 2000..... | 76 |
| V. Results of t-test Analysis..... | 79 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. Students Classified at Probationary – Year 2000 | 70 |
| 2. Gender of Probationary Students Enrolled in Student Success Strategies | 77 |
| 3. Gender of Probationary Students Not Enrolled in Student Success Strategies | 77 |
| 4. Average Age of Probationary Students Enrolled in Student Success Strategies | 78 |
| 5. Average Age of Probationary Students Not Enrolled in Student Success Strategies | 78 |
| 6. Grade Attainment | 82 |
| 7. Percentage of Returning Probationary Students | 83 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This descriptive study was designed to explore the characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students and the implications of their enrollment in Student Success Strategies with regards to improvement in grade point average.

Background

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City, a two-year branch campus of Oklahoma State University, offers associate of applied science and associate of science degrees and certificate programs. According to the OSU-Oklahoma City Spring 2002 Student Profile, eighty-two percent of the students are pursuing an associate degree or certificate and approximately forty-five percent of the total student enrollment indicates their intent to pursue a baccalaureate degree after leaving OSU-Oklahoma City.

Consistent with the campus demographics, the campus mission is to provide collegiate level career and transfer education programs and supportive services, which will prepare individuals to live and work in an increasingly technological and global community. A steady increase in enrollment has been experienced for the past several years, with a spring 2002 enrollment of 4,492 students (OSU-Oklahoma City Spring 2002 Enrollment Report, February 4, 2002).

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City, like other two-year colleges, has an “open-door” admission policy. The “open-door” concept provides access to higher education to potentially anyone and everyone who wishes to pursue an education at the post-secondary level regardless of their social, economic or academic background. Individuals who enroll at OSU-Oklahoma City bring with them a myriad of educational, social and financial backgrounds and experiences.

With the receipt of federal and state support, public college and university administrations provide access to the American citizenry with the understanding that a formal education should be the right of all people regardless of race, creed, color, age, or gender. Institutions of higher education have become more aware of, and more responsive to, the different kinds of students that enroll in colleges and universities across the country.

The high level of diversity that is present today on college campuses offers many challenges in the admissions process, in providing meaningful assessment, and in the guidance and the education of students. The varying needs of this increasingly diverse student body are impacting the way in which higher education institutions approach the teaching/learning experience (Stovall, 2000). With the influx of students with such a wide range of abilities and skills, colleges are faced with the enormous task of providing a meaningful educational experience to the masses.

Community colleges, by their very nature, admit many students who need some type of remediation and/or have experienced academic difficulties. Policies, procedures and intervention programs have been designed specifically to provide opportunity for

students who have experienced academic failure at the college level to stay in or return to school to pursue their academic goals.

Students whose academic performance indicates the need for intervention are identified during the admissions process. Probationary students, those students whose grade point average has fallen below 2.0, comprise an at-risk group of students whose past academic performance indicates a need for special attention, for some type of intervention to promote academic achievement.

Admissions counselors and/or faculty advisors look at the academic performance of the students on probation and attempt to identify possible reasons why the student was academically unsuccessful. Most institutions offer a variety of formal and informal interventions to promote academic success. Every effort is made to provide an opportunity for students to continue their academic studies and to ultimately achieve their educational goals.

Students who have not performed well at OSU-Oklahoma City, as well as college transfer students, who come to OSU-Oklahoma City with less than stellar academic records, may be admitted or readmitted “conditionally”. Conditional admission is one accommodation made for students who do not meet minimal admissions standards but are able to demonstrate the interest and ability to improve their academic status.

Statement of the Problem

OSU-Oklahoma City has identified a process and recommended course of action, or intervention, for probationary students in an effort to improve the academic success of these students. Based on less than a 2.0 grade point average, students are identified at the

time of application (for incoming transfer students) or at the time of enrollment (for students already attending OSU-Oklahoma City. Those students' records are "flagged" and assigned to the Admissions Committee for advisement, enrollment and follow-up.

While there is a considerable amount of data available on the OSU-Oklahoma City probationary student population, there does not currently exist meaningful information gleaned from the existing data that can support or refute the effectiveness of a student success course, Student Success Strategies, as a positive step in the on-going problem of attrition, specifically with the probationary population. Additionally, there exists an inconsistency with regards to the academic advisement of this student population.

With student retention as a focus, an understanding of the makeup of Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City probationary students and how their academic performance is impacted by the Admissions Committee's intervention will provide useful information as the campus develops and implements future intervention programs and retention strategies.

One strategy for probationary students is a college student success course entitled, "Student Success Strategies." A look at the impact this course has on probationary students is an integral part of this study.

The information gleaned from this study will assist OSU-Oklahoma City advisors and counselors to provide meaningful and appropriate guidance to students. A better understanding of the demographics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students may facilitate an improvement in the manner in which courses are delivered. Awareness of

nontraditional student traits and characteristics should enable faculty to prepare and deliver class work in a manner more meaningful to the nontraditional and at-risk student.

The problem addressed is the manner in which OSU-Oklahoma City is meeting the special needs of students who are in academic jeopardy and if the methods in place are effective in the retention and ultimately the academic success of the students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a baseline of characteristics or attributes of probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City and to identify if, and to what extent, the Student Success Strategies course was a successful strategy for improving the grade point average and retention of probationary students.

The study will provide valuable information as OSU-Oklahoma City further develops its retention strategies and implements procedures for relevant counseling and follow-up for these probational students.

Significance of the Study

The key to developing a successful and relevant program is to know your audience. In any program designed to assist students, it is helpful to understand the nature of the students. What, if any, characteristics, do probationary students possess that makes them different from the general student body? Are there differences between probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course and those probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course?

If there are differences, how can campus personnel work to make procedures and programs more effective for the group? Students included in this study have been unsuccessful in their academic pursuits and have been placed on academic probation at OSU-Oklahoma City due to low grade point average. Any additional information that can be identified that would better quantify this student population should be beneficial in the development and implementation of meaningful programs for students who are in academic trouble.

As a part of the OSU-Oklahoma City intervention and retention strategy, the OSU-Oklahoma City Admissions Committee was created to provide academic guidance and support for at-risk students. One responsibility of the Admissions Committee is to make recommendations to students for appropriate course(s) in which to enroll and credit hour load. Student Success Strategies is a course often, but not always, recommended to probationary students.

Determining differences, if any, in the grade point average and the retention of probationary students enrolling in the student success class and those who are not as well as identifying characteristics of probationary students will be beneficial for the rationale for continuation and improvement of existing OSU-Oklahoma City programs aimed at helping probationary students and/or for the development and implementation of appropriate courses and programs for the future.

Research Questions

The following broad questions were addressed with this study:

1. What are the characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students?

2. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?
3. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course?
4. Is retention improved for probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?

Limitations

Information used for this study was derived from a variety of campus sources: student records, Admissions Committee data, reports and records, and course syllabi. A formal tracking system of students admitted on probation at OSU-Oklahoma City was implemented by Student Services in the fall of 2000. Information gleaned from the archived records of OSU-Oklahoma City students who were conditionally admitted for the spring, summer or fall semesters in the 2000 calendar year was used for this study.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided for a better understanding of the terms used in this study. Definitions of terms denoted with an asterisk (*) were obtained in the Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City Catalog, 2000-2001.

Academic dismissal (suspension)* – occurs when a student has a grade point average of less than 2.0 on a conventional 4.0 scale for two semesters and has been denied access to registration and dismissed from the college.

Academic probation * - grade point average of less than 2.0 on a conventional 4.0 scale.

Academic success* – grade point average of 2.0 or above on a conventional 4.0 scale.

ACT – American College Testing. Primary assessment tool used at Osu-Oklahoma City for college entrance.

AdCom – an abbreviated version of Admissions Committee, used to describe the committee and any student who is admitted conditionally through the Admissions Committee process.

Attrition – students leaving a college/university due to voluntary withdrawal, transfer, or dismissal.

COMPASS – computerized placement test used to determine level of academic preparedness. Implemented as a secondary assessment tool.

Diversity - differences of age, gender, culture, social, economic and educational background and experiences.

Dropout – voluntary withdrawal from college studies, usually with no intent of continuing academic studies.

G.P.A. – grade point average.

Native student – a college student who continues his/her studies at the school in which he/she originally enrolled.

OSRHE – Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

Persisters – students who do not leave school, either voluntarily or involuntarily, but who persist with their academic studies.

Retention – opposite of attrition. Retaining students in an academic program of study.

SSS – Student Success Strategies

Stopout – a term generally used to describe the phenomenon of college students voluntarily interrupting their studies at an institution with the intent of resuming their studies at that institution.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to the group of OSU-Oklahoma City students who were classified as probationary students during the 2000 calendar year. The group was comprised of transfer students admitted on probation (less than a 2.0 cumulative GPA) at OSU-Oklahoma City and native OSU-Oklahoma City students who were placed on academic probation during the spring, summer or fall semester of the 2000 calendar year. The size of the total population of probationary students (335) was deemed manageable; therefore records for all 335 students were reviewed and included in the results of this research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

To support this study of the characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students, and the nature and effectiveness of the Student Success Strategies class as an intervention and retention tool, a review of the literature from books, journal articles and other related reports and records provided information about community colleges, nontraditional students, education intervention programs designed for at-risk college students, remediation and developmental classes, and student success courses. The material provided background and insight on Oklahoma higher education programs, community college students, admission and retention strategies and issues relevant to college students on academic probation.

The literature reviewed for this study has been divided into the following subsections: (1) Demographics of community colleges, (2) Demographics of OSU-Oklahoma City, (3) Admission policies and retention strategies of community colleges, (4) OSU-Oklahoma City admission policies and retention strategies, (5) Student intervention programs, (6) OSU-Oklahoma City intervention strategies, and (7) OSU-Oklahoma City Student Success Strategies.

Community College Demographics

Community colleges have been undergoing steady and profound change for more than two decades. A facet of this change has been that students described as “nontraditional” constitute an increasing proportion of the student population. Cohen & Brawer (1996) describe nontraditional students as individuals who do not conform to the profile of the traditional 18-year old student who enrolls full-time at the community college, completes the freshman and sophomore years, and transfers to a four-year college to earn a baccalaureate degree.

Cohen and Brawer (1996) noted various student demographic changes that occurred during the period 1970 and 1994 which affected the community college student population: (a) the mean age for students increased from 27 in 1980 to more than 31 by 1993 as large numbers of adult learners returned to college to acquire and upgrade skills; (b) the number of female students pursuing a college education increased to the point of outnumbering male students; (c) minority student enrollment increased; and (d) students enrolled on a part-time basis increased.

The nature of college students is changing. The “traditional” college student – white, male, 18-21 years old, attending a four-year liberal arts college full-time, and living on campus – is now in the minority in higher education. Today’s college population now includes the traditional college types as well as significant proportions of older students who are returning to school due to changes in the economy, roles of women, and work environments. Students range from those whose families are able to finance their education fully, to adults whose incomes must also cover family expenses, to low-income students who require financial assistance (Magolda and Terenzini, 1999).

Many community college students are now over the age of twenty-five and work full time while in school. There are more female students attending college and many students are also parents. Community college enrollments boast a greater number of minority students than in years past. There are more students attending two-year schools than ever before. More students are attending college on a part-time basis. Students are taking over four years to get a degree because of part-time status, increased hours in degree programs and difficulty in scheduling course loads in order to complete degree requirements.

The nontraditional student population poses many challenges for colleges. Students of today are older, have varying levels of academic readiness and a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. Many students entering college today are savvy consumers who come with high expectations of the educational system. Community college leaders have the challenge of providing access and accommodation with the goal of retention and graduation to a group of students who exhibit little school loyalty, either to the institution or the educational process as a whole. These students are more transient in the college setting; often changing schools for no other reason than to get a better class schedule. Many list their personal priorities as work first, family second and school as third.

Community college administrators find it increasingly difficult to enforce hard and fast rules with regards to their nontraditional student population. Many of the guidelines that have been developed to improve student satisfaction and retention are perceived as intrusive, unfair, and unacceptable to the older, nontraditional student.

The non-achieving or under-achieving students who have been selected for this study have spent one or more semesters in college. They know they are (book) smart enough to be successful but are unwilling to admit that there may be courses that can help them learn how to identify problems and develop skills and habits that will promote academic success.

Non-achieving students are often resentful of the expectations and guidelines set forth as conditions of their enrollment. Studies have shown; however, that students (traditional and nontraditional alike) can, and will, respond to directive modes. College officials must base their advisement decisions not on just what the student wants, but also on the ethical and prudent course of action that will provide the most benefit to the student as well as the campus community.

Most studies on student retention have focused on student satisfaction at four-year institutions where students tend to be more traditional in nature. Public two-year colleges have a different student population than most four-year colleges and universities. Community and junior colleges have more non-traditional students and the majority of students commute.

The following are factors that distinguish adult learners, which generally comprise the majority of students at community colleges, versus students of traditional college age:

- (a) adult learners usually come to college with a clear purpose whereas younger students may be in college because their parents want them to be there;

- (b) adult students tend to pay their own tuition whereas younger students send the bill to their parents;
- (c) adult students have more commitments than younger students who often work, but usually not on a full-time basis;
- (d) adult students have more life experiences to bring to the learning environment whereas younger students are still accumulating life experiences;
- (e) since the ages of adult students cover a broad range of 23 to 75 or more, these students are at different developmental stages in which they deal with various life crises whereas younger students between the ages of 18 and 22 go through this stage and deal with similar issues; and
- (f) traditional college students are on “the college schedule” whereas adult students have already passed the “socially accepted” college time.

OSU-Oklahoma City Demographics

The demographics of the OSU-Oklahoma City student body are consistent with the trends seen at community and junior colleges across the country. Sixty-four percent of OSU-Oklahoma City students are enrolled on a part-time basis. Most of those students who attend college on less than a full-time basis are doing so because they are employed full- or part-time.

There has been a steady and marked increase in the female student enrollment at OSU-Oklahoma City. According to the (OSU-OKC) Spring Student Profile (January 15 and 16, 2002 Report) the population is comprised of forty-three percent male and fifty-

seven percent female. The average age for OSU-Oklahoma City students is 27, a little less than the national average.

Approximately 10% of the students are admitted on probation each semester. According to the OSU-Oklahoma Student Profile, during 2000, fifty percent of the students indicated a goal of pursuing an associate degree or certificate program. Forty-nine percent report undecided. More than forty percent of OSU-Oklahoma City students have indicated a goal of transferring to a four-year college once they are able to gain the necessary skills and/or grades to transfer with the intent of pursuing a bachelor's degree.

In summary, the majority of OSU-Oklahoma City students often fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Female
- Single parent
- Working to support the family and/or to defray educational costs
- Between the age of 19 and 30
- Academically “at-risk” and in need of remediation in one or more areas, specifically reading and math
- Receiving some form of student financial aid
- In need of extensive assistance with achievement of success in college of either first-generation status or previous college failure
- Needing assistance in career planning and life planning

Community College Admission Policies and Retention Strategies

The ways in which two-year and four-year institutions differ with regards to their student body attributes as well as how they address student retention issues have been reviewed, studied, and compared by many researchers and educators. Consistent with most aspects of our society, higher education is dynamic and always changing.

Changes in the student demographics should be reflected by changes in student services and programs designed to promote student success and student retention. Student retention is a very real and critical issue for all colleges and universities. In order for community colleges to stay alive in the highly competitive world of education, keeping students is a funding must. We would like to think of higher education as a necessary link in the advancement of our humanity, that it is for the greater good. The reality, however, is that higher education is a business offering education as a commodity. Higher education is about numbers and the “bottom line.”

While it was the intent of this study to look at the characteristics of probationary students and the effectiveness of one particular intervention effort directed at probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City, it is important to be aware of some of the dynamics with regards to the retention of students.

Marks (1967) reported that several factors affected the dropout rate of traditional college students in a traditional (four-year) college environment. A sample of 1000 entering freshmen were administered a questionnaire with the intent of obtaining possible reasons why they or someone else might drop out of college. It was concluded that students' expectations of completion were shaped by such factors as family dynamics,

social influences, academic preparedness, environmental outcomes, and personality types.

Family dynamics involved parental attitudes toward education, parental behaviors and their influence on the student's behavior, and parental expectations for the student. Social influences impacting students included student's fear of failure, level of aspiration, and educational values. Pre-college entrance test scores measured intellectual functioning, which was considered to be scholastic ability. Environmental outcomes involved academic achievement as indicated by high school grade average. Personality type included judgmental skills and preferred modes of dealing with information input.

The expectations of completion by the students were correlated with their academic skills, motivation, and ability to adjust. There were significant differences (.05 level) between potential persisters and potential dropouts, with probable dropouts reporting higher feelings of fear of failure. There was a positive correlation between fear of failure and parental attitudes and expectations. Marks also discovered that students with high probabilities of dropping out of college had lower levels of aspiration than probable persisters and the lack of educational commitment often led to subsequent withdrawal from college.

Tinto (1975) developed a model of student retention (persistence) for traditional college students that involved factors similar to Marks' (1967) findings. The model was based on a theory of suicide (Durkheim, 1961). Durkheim's theory explained that suicide was more likely to occur when an individual had not adequately integrated into a collective society, where personal values differed from those of society, and where there were inadequate personal interactions with other members of that society. Tinto (1975)

applied this theory to compare suicide (dropping out of life) to a student's dropping out of college. Specifically, the chance of a person committing suicide notably increases when two types of integration are lacking: "insufficient moral integration and insufficient collective affiliation" (Tinto, 1975, p. 91). Tinto considered the academic institution as a student's collective society.

Integration with the institution involved both the academic and the social domain of the college environment. The student's intellectual development, the intellectual climate of the institution, and the student's commitment to complete college were components of the student's academic integration. Social integration involved interactions with peers and faculty.

Tinto described a process of student interaction with the college environment that would either lead to retention (persistence) or dropout behavior. Tinto profiled students who tended to dropout as being more impulsive, having less flexibility to adapt to change, and being more anxious and restless.

Tinto's model included the following characteristics:

Family background

- Socioeconomic status
- Level of education of parents
- Relationship between parent and student
- Parental expectations

Individual background

Past educational experiences

- High school performance
- Academic ability
- Personality
- Attitudes

Motivation

Goal commitment (Tinto, 1975, p. 20)

Tinto argued that the student's integration into the academic and social systems of the university was the biggest factor contributing to a traditional student's retention.

Borglum and Kubala (2000) investigated how Tinto's (1987) model of integration could be applied to two-year institutions. Their study explored academic and social integration and the effects that integration had on student withdrawal rates as well as the effect of background skills on withdrawal rates. Four hundred sixty-two second-semester, degree-seeking community college students completed a survey regarding their satisfaction with the academic and social climate of the community college.

Survey results revealed that there was no correlation between academic or social integration and withdrawal rates. Their study concluded that students who felt academically integrated also felt socially integrated. It was the opinion of the study's authors that this could be due to the fact that second-semester students were surveyed and that second semester students had already been through a "weeding out" process and were more likely to have a firm notion of their goals.

Viewing the college as a unique social system, Spady (1970) identified the analogy between suicide and dropping out. An interdisciplinary approach explains the dropout process as an interaction between individual students and a particular college environment in which their interests, attitudes, and skills come into contact with influences, expectations, and demands from a variety of sources, including courses, faculty, and peers. The resulting interaction provides students with the opportunity of assimilating successfully into both the academic culture and the social system of

the college. Spady stated that if the students' values differed substantially from the institutional norms, they are more likely to drop out and thus remove themselves from the alien environment.

Astin (1975) conducted a longitudinal, multi-institutional research study to determine incoming students' characteristics that are most predictive of college persistence. He examined the records of approximately 101,000 entering freshmen in 1968 that had completed a 175-item entry survey covering such background information demographics, goals, study habits, daily activities, and self-prediction about possible college outcomes.

This same sample of students received a follow-up questionnaire in 1972, concerning their educational progress since entering college; 41,356 students returned the surveys. Astin (1975) found that high school grade point average (GPA) was the most consistent predictor of college persistence. As high school grades and composite scores on the American College Test (ACT) or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) decrease, students' chances of stopping out or dropping out of college increase. The educational level of parents also contributed to students dropping out or remaining in school. Astin suggested that more educated parents exerted pressure on their children who then felt compelled to complete college.

Astin also found that older students, especially women, were more likely to drop out than students who were 17-19 years of age. Women often delay or end their educational pursuits with the advent and subsequent responsibility of children. Older students drop out of college because of job and family responsibilities.

Pascarella and Terrenzini (1979) used Tinto's model in a study of 1,457 incoming freshmen in New York. They developed an instrument to measure the factors used in Tinto's model. Their five factor (characteristic) scales included: Peer Group Interactions; Interactions with Faculty; Faculty Concern for Student Development; Academic and Intellectual Development; and Institutional and Goal Commitments.

Pascarella and Terrenzini (1980) found that the factors in Tinto's model could be used as reasonable predictors in explaining student persistence and dropout decisions. They found that social integration was a stronger factor for women's decisions to dropout and that academic integration affected more of the men's decision. Pascarella and Chapman (1980) found that in two-year commuter institutions, goal commitment was a stronger predictor than institutional commitment.

Bean and Metzner (1985) describe the change in educational institutions that has resulted from the increase in nontraditional students over the last 40 years. Most nontraditional students do not live on campus, have part-time or full-time jobs and have family responsibilities. As a result they do not have as much interaction with faculty or peers as traditional students. They are also more likely to have an established social environment outside of campus.

Community college students often find involvement on campus difficult if not impossible. The part-time student arrives on campus, attends classes, participates minimally in out-of-class activities, and leaves the campus to return to work, family, and personal concerns.

As a result, Bean and Metzner suggested that there was less influence in the socialization process on nontraditional students than on traditional students. The social

integration factors of Tinto's model were replaced with external environmental factors, which included: finances, hours of employment, outside support and encouragement, family responsibilities and opportunity to transfer.

Bean and Metzner reviewed 80 empirical studies and developed a model for student retention. Their model used Tinto's variables of age, enrollment status, residence, educational goals, high school performance, ethnicity, and gender. In addition, the model used academic variables (study habits, academic advising, absenteeism, certainty of major, course availability, and academic outcome) and intent to leave factors (utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress).

Ashar and Skenes (1993) applied Tinto's (1975) model to the nontraditional student. They studied 25 adult learner classes. The classes averaged 15 students each. Ashar and Skenes added a new variable – career integration (obtaining credential for marketability). They suggested that many adult learners were more motivated by enhancing career potential than by self-development and growth. Their study considered four independent variables including academic integration, social integration, career integration, and class size with the dependent measure of dropouts from the program. The study results showed that these four variables collectively accounted for 44.2% of the variance in the dropout rates. Their research suggested that while programs that meet the academic or career needs of adults may attract students, they may not be enough to retain them. Social environment was the main factor in retention of the nontraditional students. This differed from the model proposed by Bean and Metzner (1985).

Oklahoma public colleges and universities are faced with a \$9.1 million reduction effective February 2002 (Oklahoma Higher Education, 2002). Programs and services at

all public colleges and universities will be evaluated for their effectiveness and relationship to the student and campus success. Ineffective programs and/or programs for which there is little justification or documentation are at risk of being cut.

Colleges and universities cannot afford to “do business as usual.” College administrators, faculty and staff must be sensitive to the diverse needs of all students. Educators must provide the opportunity to succeed to all students including the under-prepared and the academically at-risk. Colleges and universities must develop policies and procedures that provide effective means to assist students to be successful. A successful retention program should provide a “win-win” scenario for both the college campus and the student.

Students on probation represent a population at risk for academic failure and disqualification. In order to retain these students, many colleges and universities focus on providing interventions. Intervention strategies include special workshops, seminars, peer mentoring, ongoing counseling, and student success classes. Many studies have been done to identify and provide strategies that will aid in the retention of college students.

It is the responsibility of college faculty and staff to provide firm guidance and clear-cut expectations, and to delineate academic and institutional requirements to our students. Many times just the suggestion for a student to enroll in a student success class prompts ill feelings in the advisement process and opens the door for potential academic problems. Older, non-traditional students are often difficult to direct into academic programs that they feel are not personally appropriate. Based on student responses in the admissions/advisement process, enrolling in a student success class may fall into a

category of “not personally appropriate,” not applicable to academic goal, not covered by external funding, or just not relevant. The only way the student success class can help the probationary student population is if they enroll in the class. The Admissions Committee members must be objective and consistent in the manner in which they provide academic advise and enroll students.

More students are entering community colleges under-prepared in basic academic areas. Additionally, more students are entering at the community college level after having left four-year institutions voluntarily or involuntary.

Cuvo, Freeman, Canavin, and Bryson (1986) and Miller (1981) reported on the use of “friendly” versus “authoritarian” letters sent to students as notification of their (probationary) academic status. These studies concluded that an authoritarian approach provided better results with regards to student response to information and recommendations provided by the college personnel.

In another study, students at a California community college expressed their concern about the format of a standard letter sent advising them of their probation status. The intent of the letter was to notify students of their academic standing and services available to them. The letter was in bold print and the students reported that they felt unwelcome at the college based on that one piece of correspondence (Beck, 1996).

The perception of alienation that so often occurs with students presents a challenge for educators. College staff must inform students of a serious event (i.e. academic probation) and still offer support in such a way that the students are receptive to the information and understand that the concern of the administration is real (Beck, 1996).

Retention strategies used by community colleges are varied and are designed to help students overcome many of the challenges they face in trying to obtain a post secondary education. Rummel, et al., (1999) contend that not all attrition is negative. They contend that student failure is a necessary part of the natural selection (elimination) process, that not everyone who enters into the college environment is capable of success and that we do a disservice by admitting (and readmitting) everyone. No college can be, or should even attempt to be, everything to everyone.

When students leave a campus it is often presumed that if they left before the completion of a degree they must have been unsuccessful; however, they may have been quite satisfied with their experience to the point of obtaining their goal. Most colleges do not have in place a means by which they track and evaluate student success or goal attainment beyond tracking graduation rates. College administrators still equate numbers of graduates as their guidepost of student success and that is not the case for all students.

Students leave college for a variety of reasons. And while this study is not about student retention issues, per se, the inability for some students to be successful on the college campus is, in part, what this study addresses. We know that many students leave college before the attainment of their academic goals. We know that effective retention strategies can lower the numbers of departing students. This study was designed to identify if the Student Success Strategies course positively impacts student retention at OSU-Oklahoma City. Is it helping students be more successful academically?

Some reasons why students leave college are not within the control of the individual institution. Students drop out or stop out of college not always because of academics. Quite often financial and personal reasons cause the shift in student

priorities. Universities have little chance of developing effective retention programs if the issues and/or reasons why students leave are not clearly identified. Many academicians and researchers have reviewed, studied, and postulated about the reasons why students have difficulty in college, why students are successful or not, and what higher education institutions can do to prevent attrition.

Levitz and Hovland (1998) have listed broad reasons that ultimately have an impact on a student's decision to drop out:

1. Personal: stressed, closed to new ideas and experiences, undisciplined, unmotivated, insecure, unformed, unrealistic expectations, student-institution mismatch
2. Social: alienation and social isolation, subject to negative peer pressure, uninvolved in college activities, little involvement with faculty members or advisers
3. Academic: under-prepared, under-challenged, poor study habits, does not see value in assignments and courses, low academic performance, part-time course load, lack of educational and career goals, feedback that is too little too late
4. Life issues: insecurity about financial circumstances, job and school time conflicts, home and family responsibilities and difficulties, personal problems, health problems, college not necessary to meet career goals
5. Institutional issues: Experience the run-around, experience operational problems (for example, in billing and scheduling), experience negative attitudes in classrooms, advising centers, administrative offices; experience

poor or indifferent teaching, encounter instructional equipment or technology that is out of date; academic program not available

Tinto (1987) posits that individual persistence or departure from institutions of higher education arises from a process of interactions between the individual and the institution. Individuals enter the college with a variety of personal attributes, skills, values, family background and prior educational experience and achievement that form a base for subsequent interactions in the academic and social life at the college. Positive integration serves to strengthen individual goals and institutional commitment and to foster persistence. Conversely, negative experiences may lead to students' departure from college. Tinto profiled students who tended to dropout as being more impulsive, having less flexibility to adapt to change and being more anxious and restless.

Tinto defines involuntary departure as a form of academic dismissal. It typically results from the individual's inability or unwillingness to meet the minimum standards of academic performance required to maintain enrollment (Noel, et al, 1985).

For many individuals, involuntary departure is most often associated with insufficient intellectual competence or a lack of the skills required to meet the demands of college work (Noel, et al, 1986). But there are many others for whom academic dismissal is largely the result of the lack of the study skills and habits required for college work (Demitroff, 1974).

A study by Ramirez and Evanss (1998) yielded an extensive list of elements/factors that contribute to the probationary status of students. Their principle probation-related factors include:

- Inappropriate course selection and poor scheduling;

- Poor motivation resulting from a lack of clear or realistic personal and career goals;
- Failure to recognize or to adjust to increased expectations of the university environment;
- Lack or insufficiency of support services;
- Faculty members' limited familiarity with resources available to students recognized as having difficulties;
- External factors such as financial difficulty, family obligations, job schedules and medical emergencies;
- Major personal life changes that reorder priorities; and
- Lack of comprehensive and ongoing counseling and monitoring.

Ramirez and Evan found that the probation population's prior experience(s) had conditioned most of them to confine their university obligation to their class time and assigned homework, to the exclusion or minimal use of libraries, labs, tutorial centers or study groups, faculty office hours, career development centers, counseling centers, student organizations/activities and enrichment programs. Support services made available to assist students with their academic pursuits are usually ignored by this already at-risk group.

Remediation is most often linked to the course of study aimed at first-time freshmen who have demonstrated a deficiency in one or more academic areas; however, there is every indication that colleges, community colleges in particular, are in the business of remediation of students who are beyond their freshman year. Students whose knowledge of academic areas (math, English, reading) has been deemed "college level"

through assessment are discovering that they are lacking in some other fundamental skills that are necessary for academic success.

Students who are falling short of academic success are doing so for a myriad of reasons, but what we are finding is that basic skills such as time management, goal setting, critical thinking and study skills have been neglected. Colleges are reeducating students in these areas with varying degrees of success. OSU-Oklahoma City has identified the Student Success Strategies course as a vehicle through which students can learn and perhaps relearn these valuable skills.

Bean and Metzner (1985) identified four sets of variables that define a conceptual model of attrition for the nontraditional undergraduate student:

- (1) background and defining variables - specifically age, enrollment status, and residence
- (2) environmental - such as finances and family responsibility
- (3) psychological outcomes - for example stress, commitment and satisfaction
- (4) academic - particularly study habits, academic advising, and course availability.

A nontraditional student is affected more “by external environment than by social integration variables affecting traditional student attrition” (p. 485).

It is critical for at-risk students to receive timely and appropriate guidance. Students must be made aware of their situation and possible outcomes if they do not implement positive changes. They should be required to enroll in classes designed to give them the tools necessary for continued academic success.

Researchers have seldom discriminated between student failure and voluntary withdrawal, and between temporary withdrawal and permanently dropping out. Studies of the nature of the dropout process have been misleading, contradictory and inconclusive, partially due to the failure to clearly define dropout. (Beck, 1996).

Students who experience academic difficulty are more likely to drop out of school than students who are experiencing academic success on the college campus. Prior to leaving college many students are placed on academic probation. While this classification puts students “on notice” and still provide the opportunity for improvement, many students become discouraged and quit without trying to improve their academic standing.

Many factors have been cited as contributing to college students being placed on academic probation. Some of the most cited factors are: attendance (Durden & Ellis, 1995); financial problems/necessity of work (Dunwoody & Frank, 1995; Lucas 1991; Olson 1990); personal/family problems (Dunwoody & Frank. 1995; Lemoncelli & Leonard, 1990; Lucas, 1991); lack of social proficiency (Behrens, Newlon, & Duran, 1995); Coleman & Freeman, 1996); and uncertain goals (Behrens et al., 1995; Olson, 1990).

In the community college context, Astin’s characterization of success in college as “students persisting to goal completion” is most appropriate (1982). Success, or goal completion, involves something different for each college student. Goals of community college students include completion of an associate degree, transferring to another institution and completing a four-year degree, gaining confidence in the postsecondary setting, gaining skills necessary for employment security and/or advancement, and/or

pursuing an interest related to a personal development agenda. Given these multiple student agendas, the community college personnel must develop and maintain an ongoing relationship with its students so that their goals are known, encouraged, and monitored (Ender, et al., 1996). College personnel must understand the goals of their students if they are to gauge the success of their programs.

Student success courses and extended orientation programs have been designed to help students learn to be more effective in school and thereby improve student performance and retention (David, 1988). Unfortunately, many students maneuver through their first semesters at college without being advised or required to enroll in any type of student success course. It is presumed that if a student is identified through high school transcript, college entrance exam and/or placement tests to be academically ready for college-level classes, a student success class is not warranted.

The fact that students have demonstrated their ability to perform at the high school level and have test scores that indicate their readiness to handle college work does not mean that they have mastered the skills and/or discipline necessary to ensure academic success once enrolled in college classes. Too many students find themselves on probation or suspension because they have not been exposed to sound strategies and principles for success.

Students who are unsuccessful at four-year campuses and find themselves on probation or suspension look at community colleges as an option for continuation of their studies. The probation status does not necessarily deny the student from continuing at the four-year school, but students often find it a better option to change their environment in order to promote a positive change in study habits. Students may find fewer distractions

at two-year campuses, especially if the campus is a commuter campus. Students who have been suspended from a state supported four-year college in Oklahoma have only the option of attending a two-year school if they wish to continue their educational process. When the suspended student improves his or her G.P.A. to an acceptable level, he/she may re-enroll in the formerly attended college.

Students who are placed on academic probation need immediate and effective ways to turn around their academic failures. Programs aimed at improving the study skills and habits of students are quite often effective in reducing the frequency of academic dismissal (Noel, et al, 1985).

Remediation is generally used in context with under-prepared freshmen students; however, freshmen students are not the only students who are requiring remediation. Community colleges are also providing remedial services and instruction to students who have already attempted college work and have been unsuccessful for any number of reasons. Levitz, et.al, state “student persistence to the completion of educational goals is a key indicator of student satisfaction and success” (1999).

Two-year colleges are faced with the challenge of providing educational opportunities and services to students who have fallen into academic difficulty. Academic difficulty in this context refers to a cumulative grade point average less than 2.0. This group of at-risk students is generally comprised from two categories: (1) “reverse transfer” students who, prior to attending a two-year college, were last enrolled at a four-year institution and (2) students who start at the two-year college level and who have been suspended or placed on academic probation due to poor grades (Kajstura & Keim, 1992).

The transition for reverse transfer students, from four-year to two-year institutions, occurs for many reasons. Some of those students have already earned a college degree and are enrolling at a two-year college to upgrade or learn new skills or, complete a specialized certification or experience personal growth. Other reasons contributing to the reverse transfer from four- to two-year colleges are smaller class size, convenient location, lower fees, flexibility in course offerings, or academic complications experienced at a four-year institution. Students who have experienced academic failure and have returned to the two-year college setting, specifically OSU-Oklahoma City, are a part of the selected population for this study.

Regardless of the reasons, two-year college faculty are being called upon to educate and provide remediation for students from all levels of academic preparedness. Students on probation represent a population at risk for academic failure and disqualification (Trombley, 2000). These students are teetering on a fine-line between academic success and failure. This study focused on probationary students - students who have experienced academic difficulty at the four-year college level to the point of suspension or probation and are petitioning to gain admission to OSU-Oklahoma City to “get back on track”, to improve their grades and ultimately achieve their educational goals. Others in the study were students who have only attended OSU-Oklahoma City (referred to as native students) and are in academic jeopardy. This study looked at measures used at OSU-Oklahoma City to intervene in these probationary students’ academic careers in order to facilitate success and retention.

OSU-OKC Admission Policies and Retention Strategies

OSU-Oklahoma City's policy on admission provides an easily accessible educational opportunity for all students who can profit from college level instruction. The two-year campus boasts an open-door admissions policy that provides accessibility to most individuals pursuing acceptance into a higher education institution. Students' academic records and assessment test results are reviewed to determine at what level the student is prepared (Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City 2002 Catalog). For the purposes of this study, only requirements pertinent to students on probation are provided here.

Individuals requesting admissions, readmission or continuation at OSU-Oklahoma City, who have performed poorly, with a less than 2.0 cumulative G.P.A. at the college level are admitted or placed on probation. These students have a higher risk of failure than students with higher grade point averages. The admissions personnel identify these students and process them through the Admissions Committee. The Admissions Committee is listed in the institution Committee Assignments handbook as “an Ad Hoc committee that meets during the enrollment period to review applications of students who will be considered for special admission”. The committee is comprised of Student Services staff (specifically from the admissions, advisement and registrar's offices) and selected faculty.

Students who come to OSU-Oklahoma City looking for a “second chance” after having been placed on probation or suspension from another college go through the admissions process and find an additional step in the process. Each of these students must petition the Admissions Committee for conditional admission. “Special Admission

Categories” provide definition and conditions for admission of special populations such as adults who have not graduated from high school, concurrently enrolled high school students, and graduates of home study programs. The admission of students academically suspended is explained in the Special Admission Categories section of the catalog. The OSU-Oklahoma City Admissions Committee is a key element in the process of probationary student intervention. The Admissions Committee efforts in guiding the probationary students into a course of action that may lead to an improvement in G.P.A. is one intervention strategy designed for this at-risk group of students.

The current practice requires the students/applicants to meet with the Admissions Committee as a step in the advisement, enrollment and on-going counseling process. The Committee reviews the student’s academic history and identifies the conditions under which the student will be allowed to enroll for classes. These conditions may include one or more of the following requirements: a limit on the number of credit hours in which the student can enroll (especially if the student is working while attending school); a mid-term conference with his or her academic advisor; the attainment of a minimum grade point average (no less than 2.0); and enrollment in a Student Success Strategies (GEN 1161 or GEN 1163) course. The Student Success Strategies course is often, but not always, required of these students.

The process begins when the student’s application and academic transcripts are received. Any admission clerk may identify students in need of a conditional admission, but an assigned admissions clerk, who is also a member of the Admissions Committee, will then serve as the student’s contact for the remainder of the process and for the duration of the students’ probationary status. A Petition for Conditional Admission is

required as part of the process. An appointment is scheduled for the student to meet with the Senior Admissions Officer (also a member of the Admissions Committee).

When the student and Senior Admissions Officer meet, the following topics are discussed:

- Problems during the student's last academic experience – it is important for the student to recognize the problem(s) previously encountered in order for him/her to avoid them in the future;
- Changes/improvements the student has made since last academic experience;
- Institutional fit – identifying the fit between student goals and institutional mission is addresses;
- Responsibilities including work load, family, other commitments, etc.;
- and
- Plan of action.

The Admissions Committee reviews the student's academic records as well as reasons that have contributed to the student's poor academic standing. The Committee also considers the student's current educational goal and any mitigating circumstances that are significant to the past academic records. The admissions staff and the Admissions Committee members make an effort to look at all of the factors that have contributed to the students previous failure as well as obstacles that may prohibit the student from being successful at OSU-Oklahoma City. Every effort is made to advise students toward making practical, realistic and attainable goals.

The OSU-Oklahoma City 2002 catalog states, students who have been suspended from another institution and are admitted conditionally are “required to take GEN 1161 or GEN 1163 (Student Success Strategies)”. However, there exists an inconsistency with regards to the policy. Not all probationary students are being required to take the class. Students who have only been placed on probation, but not yet suspended from another institution are admitted conditionally, but the catalog does not reflect the Student Success Strategies course as a requirement. OSU-Oklahoma City students have been placed on academic probation may or may not be required to take the course. The campus registrar who chairs the Admissions Committee stated that “all students admitted on probation are supposed to be enrolled in the course, unless they have previously taken the course.” The decision to enroll or not to enroll probationary students in the Student Success Strategies class is a subjective one. When enrolling students, the advisors make their enrollment recommendations after considering factors such as workload, financial aid benefits, previous course work that may have provided similar information (i.e. orientation course at another college) and recommended credit hour load for the semester.

OSU-Oklahoma City has implemented a plan to guide at-risk students. Each semester these students request admission/readmission to the college. Individuals who fall into this category of at-risk students are:

- Individuals who have already dropped out of another institution because of less than satisfactory academic progress;
- Students who were previously suspended from OSU-Oklahoma City are, after a certain amount of “time out”, are requesting readmission; and

- Students, who have never left OSU-Oklahoma City and find themselves in an academic probationary status.

It is the students in these at-risk categories that were targeted for this study.

Personnel at OSU-Oklahoma City and many other colleges have a difficult time identifying dropouts from stopouts. We wrestle with the challenges of providing a meaningful educational experience to a very diverse student body while implementing strategies to keep students in the system. Aimed at attracting nontraditional students, increased attention has been given to various student support services, student activities geared to nontraditional students and improved financial assistance in the form of aid and scholarships.

Retention is a key issue for OSU-Oklahoma City as it is for all college and university administrations. Reenrollment or retention is the result, or by-product, of improved programs and services in our classrooms and elsewhere on campus that contribute to student success. (Noel, et al, 1985).

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) adopted higher student retention standards in the Oklahoma State System in an effort to increase student success by holding students accountable for their academic performance earlier in their college careers. Prior to the current policy, the retention standards were:

- 1.6 GPA 12 to 30 hours attempted
- 1.8 GPA 31 to 60 hours attempted
- 2.0 GPA more than 60 hours attempted

Beginning in fall, 1991, increased retention standards were phased in and reached current standards in the fall of 1993. The standards increased gradually by reducing the number of total credit hours attempted at a designated GPA level:

- 1.7 GPA 0 to 30 hours attempted
- 2.0 GPA more than 30 hours attempted

The State Regents' policy states that any student whose retention GPA falls below the designated level for a given semester will be placed on academic probation. Freshmen who have accumulated 30 or fewer credit hours will be placed on academic notice if their G.P.A.s fall between 1.7 and 1.9. Students on academic probation the previous semester who fail to raise their G.P.A.s to the required retention level or to achieve a 2.0 G.P.A. the next semester will be suspended immediately from the institution and may not be reinstated until one regular semester (fall or spring) has elapsed.

In 1998, the State Regents adopted a retention policy revision that permits institutions, at their discretion, to enroll first-time, spring suspended students in summer courses that meet general education or degree requirements. If these students meet the retention requirements during the summer, they may enroll in the fall semester. If not, they are suspended for the fall semester.

With the implementation of the higher retention standards, two-year colleges in Oklahoma initially saw an increase in both suspension and probation rates; however, the trend has reversed - more students are now being successful, persisting and graduating.

According to the Executive Summary report (June 2000), the effects of increasing retention standards on students are as follows:

- Suspension rates were highest in 1993-94 when the retention policy was implemented, and have since decreased at both universities and two-year colleges;
- The percentage of undergraduate students suspended continues to be higher for male students than for female students;
- The percentage of undergraduate students suspended continues to be highest for freshmen, followed by sophomores, then juniors;

- Undergraduate students with higher ACT scores are less likely to be suspended;
- Persistence rates initially decreased as the retention policy was fully implemented, but have increased since 1993-94;
- Graduation rates have increased;
- The higher retention standards have not changed the historic distributions among racial and gender groups; and
- Persistence and graduation rates are improving.

In a February 8, 2002 article (Oklahoma Higher Education, 2002), findings and recommendations made by the Oklahoma Education Task Force on Student Retention were discussed. The Task Force studied student retention and graduation rates of the state and recommended initiatives for improvement. Their report noted that Oklahoma students who go to college don't always have a goal of earning a degree, especially at the community colleges. The report stressed that higher education administrators must recognize that fact and create environments that are responsive to the students' goals. Whether students are pursuing a degree or not, college faculty and staff should still expect student success and make every effort to help students earn passing grades.

Other recommendations for Oklahoma colleges made by the Task Force that are noteworthy with regards to this study are:

- Evaluate the attainment of student goals and the extent to which the institutions are helping students achieve those goals; and
- Develop institutional early warning systems to increase student awareness of academic performance during the semester.

The report also highlighted various initiatives that most of the state's colleges and universities have used to increase retention and graduation rates. Those initiatives

include creating institutional retention task forces; requiring students to attend freshman orientation courses; making academic advisement mandatory; developing flexible course scheduling, and encouraging peer tutoring.

OSU-Oklahoma City student service and academic affairs administrators have implemented many of the initiatives noted in the report to include flexible course scheduling, peer tutoring, and a freshman orientation course. The OSU-Oklahoma City orientation course (Student Success Strategies) is recommended (and sometimes required) of probationary students.

Being able to more accurately define the probationary student body and identify successful intervention strategies is critical in the effort to retain students. Providing substantive information about the effectiveness of the Admissions Committee process to include the Student Success Strategies course is essential for the justification and continuation of funding.

Intervention Strategies

College and university faculty and staff develop and implement a myriad of intervention programs aimed at helping students improve their educational experience. Maintaining a passing grade point average (2.0 or better on a 4.0 scale) is something many students struggle with and for which intervention strategies have been implemented. When students experience success and their expectations are met with regards to the educational process they are more likely to continue their studies. Effective intervention strategies equate to better grades which usually result in the retention of students within the educational system.

Sound educational practice demands mandatory assessment and mandatory course placement (OSHRE, 2001). Roueche and Roueche stated “colleges in states that require assessment and placement report that student retention and success levels improved when mandatory policies were enforced” (p. 47).

Good academic advising is associated with increases in retention rates (Walzelek and Coulter, 1999). The University of Minnesota has implemented mandatory, “intrusive” advising as a key component of their retention program. Students must initially work with an advisor to create a clear academic plan with the intent to complete a degree and then meet with their adviser before registering for courses (Brotherton, 2001).

To positively impact retention rates of students who are in academic jeopardy, effective advisement for the probationary students should include limiting the number of credit hours in which a student can enroll as well the requiring enrollment in the student success class.

A successful retention effort should be the responsibility of the entire campus community. It is more than a role of student service personnel only - it should involve key people on the academic side of the institution as well; classroom teachers, academic advisers, and academic administrators (Noel, et al, 1985).

One usually effective way to deal directly with student retention issues is to identify teachers who understand the special needs of nontraditional students and have the skills to provide supportive, challenging as well as interactive classroom settings. Once the right teaching faculty is selected, they should be challenged and involved in finding and implementing solutions to the retention problem. Committed teachers who

are dedicated to helping the at-risk student population to succeed will do much of the work that is so instrumental and necessary in retaining students. Because of the time spent in the classroom and available office hours for students, instructors are well equipped to connect with the students and help them stay in college (Malm, 1999).

Many studies have shown that positive faculty-student relations can improve retention (Olson, 1990; Ross, 1992; Roueche, 1993; Tinto, et al, 1994; Napoli, 1996; and Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Student-faculty relationships consist not just of formal interaction in class, but also informal contact, such as discussion during office hours. Thus, student retention requires a faculty to which the student body can relate (Liu & Liu, 1999). Student success courses provide a unique opportunity for faculty to interact with students on a personal level. (David, 1988).

Noel-Levitz, a consulting firm specializing in higher education enrollment management, financial aid and student retention, honored several institutions with its 2001 Retention Excellence Awards at the National Conference on Student Retention in New Orleans in August 2001. The award recognized cutting-edge retention programs that promote student success and satisfaction. One of the recipients of these awards was Central Wyoming College.

Central Wyoming College requires at-risk students to enroll in a one-credit, five-week seminar course that combines information from the campus-service side and the academic side. Students discover their own learning styles, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and establish short- and long-term goals. The students learn how to take good notes, get the most from texts, improve memory and concentration skills, and test-taking strategies. Time management skills and career planning are also aspects of the

program. The retention rate for the students who completed the course increased from 33 percent to 61 percent the first semester (Brotherton, 2001).

A similar study (Olson, 1990) ranked (the lack of) good study, time management and goal setting skills major factors affecting students' academic progress. The inclusion of some type of college survival class or seminar seems to be a critical component in retention of probationary students.

Despite institutional variation in content and delivery, student success courses are generally offered with the overall goal of helping students identify campus resources, establish relationships with other students and with faculty members, and assess and improve their academic and life management skills. Specific topics may include goal-setting, college-level reading, time management, memory, note-taking, test-taking, stress reduction, critical thinking, creativity, library skills, communication, assertiveness, wellness, relationships, drug and alcohol issues, learning styles, community resources, campus history, the history of higher education, the value of a liberal arts education, institutional policies and procedures, financial planning, organizational skills, and career planning (David, 1988).

David (p. 2) lists the many benefits that can be enjoyed by students who successfully complete a student success course. They include:

- Difficult tasks, assignments, and papers take less time;
- Learning obstacles disappear;
- Employability is enhanced;
- Investment in education is more likely to pay off;
- School is more enjoyable;

- Grades improve;
- Studying is more productive;
- Academic, career, and life goals are in focus;
- Anxiety level is reduced;
- More hours are available for fun, work, study, or sleep;
- Notes are legible and useful;
- Inquiry skills improve;
- Tests are approached more skillfully;
- Stressful situations are easier to handle;
- Choice of school or major is clarified;
- Policies and rules that govern the institution are understood;
- Communication skills improve;
- Support groups are established;
- Self-confidence grows;
- Involvement in the educational community increases;
- Procrastination diminishes;
- Relationships improve with spouse, teachers, roommates, parents, children, etc.;
- Money is managed better; and
- Campus and community resources become more familiar.

Because many community college students have previously experienced limited academic success, one important goal of any student success course should be to help the students develop positive attitudes about learning and confidence in their abilities.

Incorporating a student success class, whether credit or noncredit, as an intervention strategy should be viewed as a priority.

Intervention programs vary from school to school, but all have been implemented in the hopes of retaining and providing remediation for students who are in trouble academically. Lipsky and Ender (1990) reported on a study that compared students who took a probation intervention course and students who did not take a probation intervention course. The probation intervention course was a one-credit study skills course that included academic goal setting, time management, listening and note taking, textbook reading, effective study skills, test-taking anxiety and preparation, and memory and concentration. Over a two-year period, Lipsky and Ender found significant differences between participants and non-participants in grade point averages, academic hours attempted, and academic hours earned. These differences were also apparent one and two years later, but were not statistically significant. Retention rates one and two years following the intervention program also favored the experimental group.

Lipsky and Ender (1990) noted four common characteristics of intervention programs. These characteristics are: frequent and consistent contact with students, usually ten hours or more; structured programs emphasizing “how to” techniques and strategies; activities requiring high student involvement; and “volunteer” rather than “forced” participation by the students.

A variety of methods have been incorporated in recent intervention strategies for probationary students. Heerman and Maleki (1994) emphasized self-assessment through a study skills portfolio; Weinsheimer (1993) used a student self-help book to provide

motivational support; and Lucas (1991) provided instruction on the probationary and dismissal system.

OSU-OKC Intervention Strategies

The success of educational institutions is directly related to the success (and satisfaction) of the students. Students who find themselves in academic trouble are prone to drop out if some type of intervention effort is not administered. Interventions in the form of counseling, prudent academic advisement, and student success courses are proactive ways in which educational institutions have addressed attrition issues.

Varying levels of student motivation, expectancy, and readiness impact how successful OSU-Oklahoma City can be in the retention of students. The efforts being made to retain at-risk, probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City include activities that are predominantly voluntary on the student's part - workshops, academic counseling, mid-term checks and participation in a student success class. To what extent OSU-Oklahoma City retention strategies are being successful is still a matter of speculation.

Intervention strategies in place at OSU-Oklahoma City include: assessment tools to better identify the level at which the student is working in order to more accurately advise enrollment; developmental class requirements to include the enrollment in Student Success Strategies; and referral to grant-funded programs that offer special tutorials and workshops for struggling and/or at-risk students.

In addition to enrolling in the Student Success Strategies class, students who are "admitted on probation" are expected to arrange a mid-term meeting with a member of the Admissions Committee (also an academic advisor). This mid-term check is designed

to discuss with the student his or her progress as well as to identify any problems or obstacles the student may be experiencing that could negatively impact his or her academic endeavors. The counselor provides a written mid-term checklist with recommendations to assist with the student's success.

In 1993, the Oklahoma State Regents' "Policy Statement on the Assessment of Students for Purposes of Instructional Improvement and State System Accountability", was modified to make remediation mandatory for underprepared students public higher education institutions in Oklahoma. The policy required that institutions use ACT scores of 19 as the "first cut" in determining whether a student needs remediation in the subject areas of English, mathematics, science reasoning, and reading. Students who score below 19 in an ACT subject area must either enroll in a remedial course or undergo secondary assessment. Students who score below a certain level on these secondary tests must enroll and successfully complete developmental/remedial courses before being allowed to enroll in college-level course.

The secondary assessment used at OSU-Oklahoma City is the COMPASS test. This computerized assessment is administered to all first-time freshmen, regardless of age, who did not score at or above the required score of 19 in any ACT subject area. Many in-coming college transfer students are also required to take the COMPASS test in order to identify the level at which they are working. Eighty-four percent of students entering OSU-Oklahoma City need remedial instruction in math; 55 percent need remedial work in reading; and 60 percent require remediation in English (writing). Test results indicate that remediation is needed not just for freshmen but also for students who

previously attended college at some point in time, whether their earlier college experience was within months or years.

Once the level of readiness is identified with COMPASS results, the task of appropriately advising the student begins. Ideally, advisement should be an on-going process for all students, with perhaps, some special attention given to at-risk and probationary students.

Improved retention rates are a result of improved programs. While the college administration is concerned with the retention of all students, it does pay particular attention to students who have fallen into academic trouble. The Student Success Strategies course, as a condition for admission of probationary students, was implemented in an effort to improve the retention rates of the at-risk, probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City.

Campus policies, practices and priorities often change, shift focus, are revised and/or are totally ignored or deleted when changes occur in staff and administration. Since 1993, the OSU-Oklahoma City campus has seen three Vice Presidents for Student Services and a significant turnover in admissions personnel. These changes may have contributed to the inconsistent manner in which probationary students have been counseled. There appears to be no consistent pattern of intervention implementation for this group of students. Over time, the Student Success Strategies course has become more of an option rather than a requirement for probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City.

OSU-Oklahoma City Student Success Strategies

In 1993, Student Success Strategies was developed as an orientation course at OSU-Oklahoma City by the Director of The Learning Center, under the leadership of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Services. The course was initially implemented as a (strongly) recommended course for first-time freshmen who, through assessment, were identified as needing remediation in one or more academics areas (math, English composition, and/or reading). The assumption was that students whose test scores indicated that they were not prepared for collegiate level work probably had not yet developed good study habits and/or learned the basic skills necessary for college survival and success.

As an “orientation” class, the OSU-Oklahoma City Student Success Strategies curriculum was designed to provide tools for success in college as well as life in general. This class was, and still is, highly recommended to first-time freshmen that enter the college requiring remediation in one or more academic areas. Requiring older, nontraditional students who are in academic trouble to enroll in a student success class provides a bit more challenge.

The course was structured to provide campus information, skills (reading, studying, test-taking, etc.) and support that would enhance the students’ ability to be successful on the college campus. The course proved to be helpful in acclimating new students to the college setting and preliminary follow-up studies indicated that the majority of those students were being successful in their other classes.

The learning objectives of the Student Success Strategies course are to improve critical thinking skills, learning strategies, computer literacy, and students’ knowledge of

available resources, both on and off campus; and to enhance students' effectiveness academically, personally, and professionally.

As an intervention strategy for at-risk students, the Student Success Strategies course is designed to promote retention and student success by providing information and study skills training to at-risk students. Whether or not this course can be quantified as an effective intervention/retention strategy for probationary students was a focus of this study. Is the grade cumulative point average for probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course significantly increased?

It was determined by the student services administration and staff that the course might also prove to be beneficial for students who had experienced academic difficulty, specifically students who were being classified as probationary. The Student Success Strategies course was added to the recommended requirements for all probationary students, native and incoming college transfer students.

Student Success Strategies (GEN 1161 or GEN 1163) are one and three credit hour courses, respectively, that encompass tools and techniques for college success and life skills. Both courses are designed with the intent to increase retention rates by creating a productive environment for student learning – to teach the students how to learn. The three-credit hour course places additional emphasis on students learning basic computer skills and competencies. The Student Success Strategies course encourages students to embrace lifelong learning and appreciate and develop critical thinking skills that are necessary for success. Much attention is given to the critical thinking component of the class.

Critical or reflective thinking skills, the ability to gather and evaluate evidence, and the ability to make one's own informed judgments are essential learning outcomes if students are to make informed judgments in the world around them.

Both GEN 1161 and GEN 1163 use the same textbook, *Keys to Effective Learning* (Prentice Hall, Inc.). The course serves as a valuable tool in arming students with skills necessary to successfully navigate through their college and professional careers. Course topics as outlined in the textbook include: campus resources; goal setting; time management; self-awareness (learning styles); critical and creative thinking; reading and studying; listening and memory; note taking and library research; effective writing; test taking; diversity; personal wellness; and managing career and money. A brief summary of the topics as covered in the textbook is provided below.

Campus Resources. Students are introduced to some background information about higher education in general. Questions such as who is pursuing an education today? How does education promote success? And what resources are available at your school are covered in this unit. The introduction to college resources is designed to help students locate and learn to effectively use college resources. Students have the opportunity to learn important college policies and related dates and timelines. Class activities include an introduction to college publications and academic policies; instruction in establishing an e-mail account; and a team exercise whereby the students seek out locations and services available through academic advisement, financial aid, tutoring, student clubs and organizations and student activities.

Goal Setting and Time Management. This is a particularly important and relevant unit for college students. Students are guided through the processes of defining values,

identifying priorities, and setting and achieving goals. How individuals manage their many responsibilities impacts their ability to be successful. Students keep a log of their time for a full week and then see how building a schedule, being flexible, prioritizing and taking responsibility for how they spend their time can positively impact their productivity.

Self-awareness. Students explore their learning styles and personality types and learn how this information is helpful in their understanding and retaining information. The students delve into their own interests, habits, abilities and self-perceptions and discover how these can impact their choice of college major as well as possible careers.

Critical Thinking. Critical thinking is the tool with which students learn to question established ideas, create new ideas, and turn information into tools to solve problems and make decisions. Understanding the value of critical thinking is a key element in success in higher education and in life in general. In the Student Success Strategies course students learn how to solve problems and make decisions. They become familiar with the seven building blocks of critical thinking: recall, similarity, difference, cause and effect, example to idea, idea to example, and evaluation. Those seven mind actions build the thinking processes that help individuals solve problems, make decisions, construct arguments, establish truth, shift perspective and plan strategically.

Reading and Studying. Understanding reading challenges is critical in order for a student to make adjustments and improvements. Tips on how to identify and manage distractions, improve reading comprehension and speed are provided. Students are taught the SQ3R (Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review) technique that, when implemented,

will help the student more effectively understand, learn, study and remember what they read.

Note taking and Test taking. Secondary and post-secondary institutions do not usually offer courses on how to take notes, study or how to take a test; it is taken for granted that students will “get it”. Tools and techniques are provided in the class that, if implemented, can make those processes more effective and productive.

Listening and Memory. Learning how to focus listening is crucial to student success. Students learn to identify and deal with distracters in order to become active listeners. Strategies for retaining information are shared.

A Personal Focus. This unit explores the issues of diversity that can affect the ways in which individuals perceive others and relate to them. Communication styles, personal relationships, and group and team dynamics are explored. The students learn about the various kinds of conflict and criticism, and how to look at positive ways in which to respond. This section also examines both the physical and mental aspects of wellness, looking at how to maintain health as well as to identify and work through particular health problems that many students face.

Managing Career, Money and Change. Career exploration and how to balance work and school is addressed. Students are shown how managing their resources and investigating career options can help them develop skills and insights that will serve them throughout their lives. The importance of flexibility is stressed in this unit. Students learn the advantages of being able to adjust goals, make the most of successes, and work through failures. The concept of giving back to the community and continuing to learn throughout ones life is stressed.

Teaching a student body with such highly varied backgrounds as is seen in colleges today presents special challenges for faculty members. Those challenges are magnified in courses developed for the at-risk student population. Instructors for the Student Success Strategies classes at OSU-Oklahoma City are selected for their mentoring characteristics, their knowledge and understanding of the campus and the resources available to students, and their desire to help these students learn how to be successful in college and in life. Parker Palmer (1997) argues that we bring our selves to the teaching process, just as our students bring themselves to the learning process: he notes that one of the difficult truths about teaching is that it “will never take unless it connects with the inward, living core of our students’ lives” (p. 20).

The Student Success Strategies course, offered as a condition to students on academic probation, is one tool designed to assist students in getting “back on track” academically. This study has the potential of not only validating the importance of the Student Success Strategies course in a probationary student’s academic career but may also provide the means to justify reinstatement of this class as a requirement for at-risk students.

Attrition among college students can be substantially reduced by the improvement of student skills (Napoli & Wortman, 1998). The Student Success Strategies course can be a viable and relevant tool in the remediation and retention of students at OSU-Oklahoma City.

When the Student Success Strategies course was developed in 1993 it was mandatory class for all conditionally admitted students. The OSU-Oklahoma City Catalog for the 1999-2000 academic year addresses the requirement of a student

success course in the section entitled “Admission of Students Academically Suspended from Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City.” The catalog states: “if admitted or reinstated, placement and participation in academic support services will be mandated by the Admissions Committee. Additionally, the student will be placed on probation and must maintain a minimum 2.00 grade point average each semester until the academic retention standard is met. (The retention standard will be based upon the cumulative credit hour total attempted by the student, exclusive of repeated or reprieved coursework).”

In the same catalog, the section entitled “Special Transfer Admission Categories” states that students who have been academically suspended from other institutions of higher education may be considered for conditional admission. If admitted, these students may be required to take assessment exams (COMPASS) and explain educational goals and circumstances surrounding the previous academic record. While some of the wording appears a bit ambiguous, the catalog clearly states that those probationary students will be required (mandated) to take GEN 1161 or GEN 1163 (Student Success Strategies).

Even though past and current OSU-Oklahoma City catalogs reflect the requirement of Student Success Strategies as a condition of enrollment for students admitted on probation, enrollment data does not support that premise. What was once a requirement has become merely a recommendation. The lack and inconsistency of information about the impact and effectiveness of Student Success Strategies at OSU-Oklahoma City is another area of concern. The absence of data makes the enforcement of the policy difficult

Studies have shown that students who attend a probation intervention seminar/class have a higher rate of probation status removal, stay enrolled at college at a higher rate, withdraw less, graduate at a higher rate, and change majors less frequently than those who do not attend the intervention seminar (Newton, 1990; Coleman & Freedman, 1996).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The role of a state supported university is extremely complex. Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City is a branch campus of Oklahoma State University. The institution has a similar mission and general characteristics as other state supported associate degree granting institutions in Oklahoma. Freshman and sophomore level courses at OSU-Oklahoma City that students may transfer to four-year colleges and universities as part of the four-year degree program. The college also offers associate of science and associate of applied science degree programs, certificate programs, continuing education programs and opportunities for persons who wish to pursue educational pursuits for their own enrichment.

Within this complex organization there has been provision made for the conditional admission of students who have failed to maintain a 2.0 grade point average at a four-year college or university, at another two-year college or at the OSU-Oklahoma City campus. These students have either been academically suspended or put on academic probation. There is a considerable amount of data available on the OSU-Oklahoma City student population; however, there currently exists little information about the probationary student population and how they have responded to strategies that have been implemented to help them improve their academic standing.

The college and its faculty, staff and administration attempt to gear course offerings, instruction and services to the needs of the student. Knowing and understanding the characteristics of the student is essential if this is to occur. The larger question for the institution is what measures can be taken, what programs can be implemented to assist these probationary students that are acceptable to the students, assists them to earn the required 2.0 G.P.A., and that is also economically feasible within a world of shrinking higher education dollars?

Statement of the Problem

OSU-Oklahoma City has identified a process and recommended course of action, or intervention, for probationary students in an effort to improve the academic success of those students. The process includes petitioning for conditional admission through the Admissions Committee and for some students, the enrollment in GEN 1161 or GEN 1163, Student Success Strategies. There does not currently exist meaningful information gleaned from the available data that can support or refute the effectiveness of the process as a positive intervention. Identifying characteristics of the probationary student population may provide useful information when assessing the impact of the class on probationary students and in the development of future programs that target the probationary student group. Guiding probationary students towards the improvement of their grade point average is a goal of the Admissions Committee. Is there evidence of a significant increase of the grade point average of the probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies class? Is the retention improved for probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies class?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify selected characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students, to look at their academic achievement for the first semester after being classified as probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City and to see if there was a significant increase in the grade point average and retention of probationary the students - those who attended the Student Success Strategies course as well as those who did not.

The characteristics reviewed for each group were gender, age, ACT scores, grade point average at the end of the semester in which they were placed on probation or conditionally admitted, high school and the name of the college or university the student attended prior to being classified as a probationary student at OSU-Oklahoma City. All students had less than a 2.0 cumulative grade point at the time of their probationary classification.

The OSU-Oklahoma City Catalog addresses the circumstances under which a student will be considered for special admission and needs to be processed through the Admissions Committee. A student who has been academically suspended from another institution of higher education, must petition for conditional admission through the Admissions Committee. A student who wishes to be considered for this conditional admission may be required to take assessment exams, explain educational goals and circumstances surrounding the previous academic records and is required to enroll in the Student Success Strategies course as part of their probationary status. Other students who

been academically suspended and seek consideration for reinstatement after one 16-week semester and incoming transfer students who do not meet the 2.0 grade point average necessary for standard transfer admission. The requirement of enrollment in the Student Success Strategies is not uniformly enforced. Less than one third of the students admitted on probation actually enrolled in the course in the year 2000.

Enrollment for conditionally admitted students is a joint decision between the advisor and the student and is based on the student's perceived need for the course, the advisor's belief in the benefits of student enrollment in the course and perhaps the advisors commitment, or lack there of, to do everything possible to promote academic achievement by the student. The requirement for enrolling students in the Student Success Strategies course as stated in the catalog, was based on the assumption that the course provides study skills and information that, when put to practice, can help students improve their grades.

The intent of this study was to identify the outcomes of the Student Success Strategies course by determining if probationary students' grade point averages showed significant increase after taking the class.

Hypotheses

1. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.

2. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
3. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
4. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.

Research Questions

The research was conducted to answer four questions relevant to OSU-Oklahoma City:

1. What are the characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students?
2. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?
3. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course?
4. Is retention improved for probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?

Population

The population for this study included all students classified as probationary for the spring semester of 2000 (125 students), the summer semester of 2000 (86 students) and the fall semester of 2000 (124 students). The total number of probationary students for the calendar year 2000 represents approximately 3.5% of the campus's total enrollment for that year. Because of the retrospective nature of the study, no students were contacted during the study and no treatments or interventions were administered to the subjects during the study. The students were identified as "AdCom (Admissions Committee) students" by the admissions office. The population was comprised of three sub-groups:

- (a) two-year transfers – those students who had transferred from other community colleges;
- (b) four-year college transfers – students who came from a variety of four-year institutions; and
- (c) native students – those students who originally matriculated at OSU-Oklahoma City.

Sample

The total number of students who were processed through the Admissions Committee and classified as probationary during the year 2000 totaled 335. Because the number of students in that population was manageable, all of the students classified as probationary were used for this study.

Data Collection

Oklahoma State University implemented, in 1999, a new system-wide, computerized SCT (Systems & computer Technology) Student Information System. A formal tracking system of students admitted on probation at OSU-Oklahoma City was implemented in fall 2000. Student records from the calendar year 2000 to present were selected for this study based on the availability of the student information specific to Admission Committee activity.

Past and current campus catalogs, institutional historical data, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education regulations were reviewed. These documents served as a source of information of current and past policies and practices of the campus.

Information gleaned from archived records and other relevant information and reports for OSU-Oklahoma City students who were conditionally admitted to the college in either the spring, summer, and fall semester in the 2000 calendar year was used for this study. Based on information available on the OSU-Oklahoma City student information database, students' records were reviewed to identify characteristics of conditionally admitted students to document the inclusion of any intervention course or program and to look at retention rates of those conditionally admitted, probationary students. A review of student academic transcripts was used to identify the enrollment (or non-enrollment) in a Student Success Strategies course. Grade point average (G.P.A.) at the end of the first semester of probation and subsequent semesters' G.P.A. were reviewed to determine retention and if any improvement in the students' academic pursuits was evident in semesters following the Student Success Strategies class. Cumulative/retention grade point average was also noted.

Student admission and enrollment data is recorded and tracked on the student information system, SCT. Archived student records from this database were researched to identify students whose status was classified as probationary.

Admissions Committee records were also made available for this study. Information provided by the Admissions Committee for inclusion in this study included student records, Admissions Committee member notes, and student mid-term check reports.

Institutional Research Board

The OSU-Oklahoma City Catalog states “a written consent of the student is not required for OSU-Oklahoma City staff or faculty members to utilize educational records for legitimate educational purposes. These members include faculty, counselors, administrators, and classified and professional level employees.” As Director of the OSU-Oklahoma City Learning Center the researcher has full access to students’ records, is knowledgeable of the Student Records and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and adheres to the college’s policy pertaining to confidentiality of student education records. A letter written by the Vice President of Student Services, OSU-Oklahoma City, further explaining the researcher’s role on campus and the ability to access student records and a statement of support of this study, was submitted to the OSU Institutional Review Board with the Application for Review of Human Subjects Research. Permission to conduct the study was received from the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis

Information gleaned from student records included the following: student age, gender, ACT scores and previous academic institutions (high school and college). The information collected relative to those selected characteristics was submitted as raw data in tables. The characteristics data was placed in tables for each student group by semester.

The information relative to academic achievement was appropriate for analysis using a t-test technique to determine significance. The decision to use this technique was solidified in nature and scope by the data and extensive reading (Garrett, 1956; Shavelson, 1996; Key, 1997; and Wiersma, 2000).

Using a one-tail t-test, the means of the students' cumulative grade point averages at the beginning of the first semester on probation (<2.0) were compared to the cumulative grade point average at the end of the semester. If the calculation value \geq table value, the null hypothesis would be rejected and a conclusion that the difference is greater than that expected by chance. If the calculation value $<$ table value, the null hypotheses would be rejected and a conclusion that the amount of difference could have been the result of chance (Key, 1997). Grade point for the two groups (course or no course) is reflected by semester.

Student enrollment records were reviewed to identify enrollment at OSU-Oklahoma City in the semesters following their first semester on probation. Continued enrollment at the college translates to a positive retention rate.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings of the study were derived from a review of 335 student records and other pertinent information available for students admitted to OSU-Oklahoma City as probationary or classified on academic probation during the calendar year 2000.

Statement of the Problem

Meaningful data on the characteristics and the academic success of the OSU-Oklahoma City probationary student population was limited. Identification of characteristics and a review of effects the Student Success Strategies course had on the grade point average of probationary students will be beneficial to campus advisors, faculty and administration as they assess and improve this and other student retention strategies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe characteristics of probationary students on the OSU-Oklahoma City campus and to learn if a significant improvement in grade point average of probationary students can be attributed to the Student Success Strategies course. Evaluation of programs and services on the college campus is necessary and

must be approached in an on-going, forward-thinking manner. The review and study of existing data will provide a basis from which to improve the dynamics between our students and the programs offered.

Hypotheses

1. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
2. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
3. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
4. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.

Research Questions

The research was conducted to answer the following broad research questions concerning probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City. The questions were:

1. What are the characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students?

2. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?
3. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course?
4. Is retention improved for probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?

OSU-Oklahoma City Demographics

Eighty-two percent of OSU-Oklahoma City students are pursuing an associate degree or certificate and approximately forty-five percent of the total student enrollment indicates their intent to pursue a baccalaureate degree after leaving the OSU-Oklahoma City campus. Consistent with the campus demographics, the campus mission is to provide collegiate level career and transfer education programs and supportive services, which will prepare individuals to live and work in an increasingly technological and global community. The total number of students enrolling each semester is increasing as is the number of students being placed on academic probation. The issue of grade improvement and retention remains one of great concern.

Of the 9,763 students enrolled during the spring, summer and fall semesters of 2000, a total of 335 students were admitted on probation (less than 4%). The number of students admitted on probation during the year 2000 was considerably less than reported by the admissions staff who had indicated approximately ten percent of each semester's students were admitted on probation.

Figure 1 reflects the number of probationary students processed through the Admissions Committee each semester in the year 2000 and the number of probationary students who enrolled in the Student Success Strategies course.

One hundred twenty-five students were admitted on probation for the spring 2000 semester. Twenty-four percent (30 students) of those students enrolled in Student Success Strategies during the spring 2000 semester. Seventy percent (88 students) of the total number of probationary students did not enroll in Student Success Strategies in the spring semester.

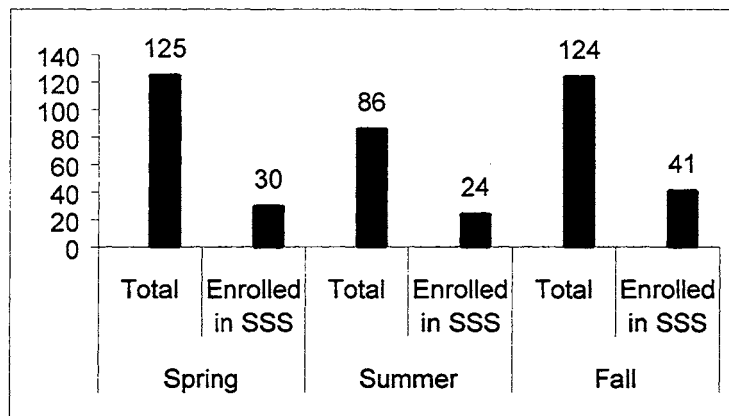


Figure 1. Students Admitted on Probation – Year 2000

The total number of students admitted on probation in the summer semester of 2000 was 86. Twenty-eight percent (24 students) of those probationary students enrolled in Student Success Strategies. Seventy-two percent (62 students) of students admitted on probation in the summer 2000 semester did not enroll in Student Success Strategies.

The number of students admitted on probation for the fall 2000 semester totaled 124. Thirty-three percent (41 students) of the total probationary students enrolled in Student Success Strategies. Sixty-seven percent (78 students) of the total probationary students did not enroll in Student Success Strategies.

Looking at the numbers for the 2000 calendar year, only 28 percent of all probationary students enrolled in a Student Success Strategies course. This number is much less than what was expected by the admissions staff.

A tabulation of high schools attended by this population resulted in a list of 87 Oklahoma high schools and 24 out-of-state high schools. High schools from all regions of Oklahoma were represented with a greater number of students coming from Oklahoma City metro and surrounding area high schools. The high schools most represented by the probationary student body were Edmond Memorial, Edmond North, Putnam City, Putnam City North, Putnam City West, John Marshall and Yukon, (Table I).

TABLE I
FEEDER HIGH SCHOOLS OF OSU-OKC
PROBATIONARY STUDENTS –
YEAR 2000

| High School | Spring | Summer | Fall |
|-------------------|--------|--------|------|
| Ada | | | 1 |
| Atoka | | | 1 |
| Bartlesville | 1 | | |
| Bethany | | 1 | 2 |
| Bethel | 1 | | |
| Bishop McGuinness | 3 | | |

TABLE I (Continued)

| High School | Spring | Summer | Fall |
|-----------------|--------|--------|------|
| Blanchard | 1 | | 1 |
| Bowleg | 1 | | |
| Bridge Creek | 2 | 2 | |
| Butler | | | 1 |
| Capitol Hill | 2 | | |
| Carl Albert | 2 | 1 | |
| Carnegie | 1 | | |
| Casady | 1 | 1 | |
| Chandler | 1 | | 1 |
| Chickasha | | | 1 |
| Chisholm | 1 | | |
| Choctaw | 1 | | 1 |
| Crescent | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Crooked Oak | | 2 | |
| Dale | | | 1 |
| Deer Creek | 1 | 2 | |
| Del City | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Dibble | | | 1 |
| Douglas | | 1 | 2 |
| Earlsboro | | 1 | |
| Edmond Memorial | 5 | 4 | 13 |
| Edmond North | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Edmond Santa Fe | | | 1 |
| Elmore City | 1 | | |
| Enid | | | 1 |
| Eufala | | | 1 |
| Grace Christian | | 1 | |
| Guthrie | | | 2 |
| Harrah | 2 | | |
| Heritage Hall | | 1 | 1 |
| John Marshall | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| Jones | 1 | | |
| Life Christian | 1 | | |
| MacAlester | | | 1 |
| Maud | | 1 | |
| Maysville | | | 1 |
| Miami | | 1 | 1 |
| Midwest City | 1 | | 2 |
| Millwood | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Moore | 3 | | 2 |
| Mt. St. Mary's | 1 | | |
| Mustang | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Newcastle | | | 1 |
| Ninnekah | | | 1 |
| Noble | | 1 | |
| Norman | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Northeast | | 2 | 2 |

TABLE I (Continued)

| High School | Spring | Summer | Fall |
|------------------------|--------|--------|------|
| NW Classen | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| OK Christian | | 1 | |
| OK School for the Deaf | | | 1 |
| Pauls Valley | | | 1 |
| Perkins Tryon | | | 1 |
| Perry | 1 | | |
| Piedmont | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Putnam City | 13 | 5 | 7 |
| Putnam City North | 6 | 7 | 11 |
| Putnam City West | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Quapah | | 1 | |
| Riverside | | | 1 |
| Seminole | | | 1 |
| Sentinel | 1 | | |
| Southeast | | | 2 |
| Spencer | | 1 | |
| Spencer | | | 1 |
| Star Spencer | | | 1 |
| Stillwater | 1 | | 1 |
| Strother | | | 1 |
| Sulpher | | 1 | |
| Tahlequah | 1 | | |
| Tecumseh | | 1 | |
| Tonkawa | 1 | | |
| Tuttle | | 1 | |
| US Grant | 1 | | |
| Washita | 1 | | |
| Weatherford | 1 | | |
| Western Heights | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Westmoore | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Woodward | 1 | | |
| Wynnewood | | 1 | |
| Yukon | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Out-of-State | 7 | 4 | 3 |

Students who were classified as probationary for the spring, summer or fall semesters of 2000 came to OSU-Oklahoma City from a multitude of higher education institutions, both in Oklahoma and from other states. Students transferred in from

twenty-four Oklahoma state and private colleges and universities and ten out-of-state colleges and universities. The colleges from which the greatest numbers of probationary students came were Rose State College, Oklahoma City Community College, University of Central Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University (TABLE II).

TABLE II
ORIGINATING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

| College/University | Spring | Summer | Fall |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|------|
| Connors State College | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| East Central University | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Langston State University | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Mid-America Bible College | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Murray State College | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| NEO | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Northeastern OK State | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Northern Oklahoma College | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Oklahoma Baptist University | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Oklahoma Christian | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Oklahoma City Community College | 19 | 13 | 18 |
| Oklahoma City University | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Oklahoma State University | 12 | 6 | 10 |
| OSU-Oklahoma City | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| OSU-Okmulgee | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Redlands Community College | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Rose State College | 22 | 17 | 20 |
| Seminole Junior College | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Southern Nazarene University | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Southwestern OSU | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| St. Gregory's University | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Tulsa Christian University | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| University of Central Oklahoma | 30 | 19 | 33 |
| University of Oklahoma | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| University of Science & Arts of OK | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Out-of-State Colleges & Universities | 5 | 3 | 11 |

While the average ACT score documented by the group of probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City was 18, it is known that four-year institutions have higher ACT scores as part of their admissions requirements. Due to the fact that so many of these students transferred in from four-year colleges and universities, the ACT score does not provide meaningful information about this group of students or for future speculation. Two-year colleges, as was stated in earlier, have open-door admissions policies allowing the admission of students regardless of ACT scores.

Only 28% (95) of the probationary students actually enrolled in and received a grade for Student Success Strategies (either the one-credit class, GEN 1161 or the three-credit class, GEN 1163): 30 students in spring 2000; 24 students in summer 2000; and 41 in fall 2000. Records from the spring and fall semesters reflected a total of 12 students (seven in the spring semester, five in the fall semester) who were admitted on probation, but withdrew with no grade reported. There is currently no documentation available that would indicate why the students withdrew. The withdrawals may be the result of personal and/or financial reasons and not a result of academic distress. Because the reasons for withdrawal are unknown, those students were not included in the study.

Grade distribution for the Student Success Strategies course taken in the three semesters by probationary students is reflected in Table III. Grade distribution by gender is shown in Table IV. The grade designation of W/AW represents Withdrawal/Administrative Withdrawal. Withdrawal from a class is initiated by the student. Faculty have the option to administratively withdraw (AW) a student from a class if he or she never attended the class.

TABLE III
GRADE DISTRIBUTION

| Semester | A | B | C | D/F | W/AW |
|----------|----|---|---|-----|------|
| Spring | 10 | 8 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Summer | 15 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Fall | 24 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 |

TABLE IV
GRADE DISTRIBUTION – BY GENDER
SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL 2000

| Grade | Male | Female |
|-------|------|--------|
| A | 26 | 23 |
| B | 9 | 6 |
| C | 4 | 2 |
| D/F | 7 | 5 |
| W/AW | 3 | 2 |

Raw data provided the information shown in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 reflecting characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students for the calendar year 2000. These data are presented in two groups, students who did enroll in the Student Success Strategies course and those students who did not enroll in the course.

The probationary student group consisted of more male students than female students. The enrollment patterns by gender reflected more female students classified on probation opted not to enroll in the Student Success Strategies course.

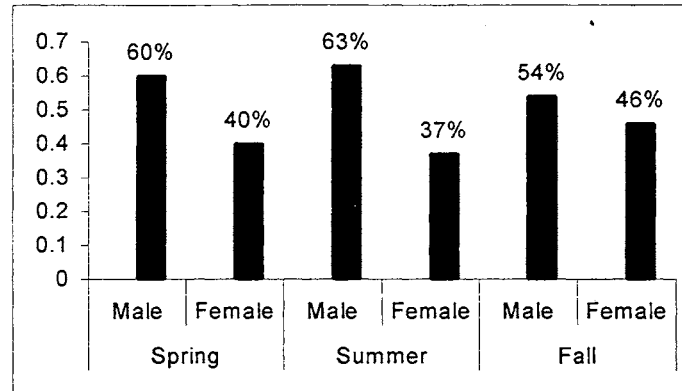


Figure 2. Gender of Probationary Students Enrolled in Student Success Strategies

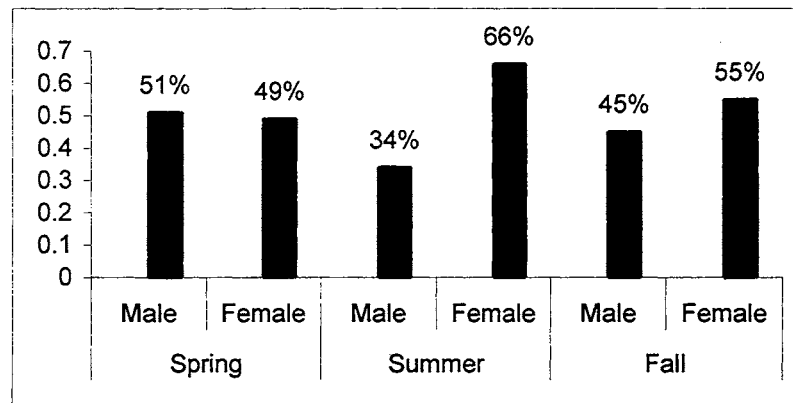


Figure 3. Gender of Probationary Students Who Did Not Enroll in Student Success Strategies

Average age of the probationary student group (those that took the success class and those who did not) at OSU-Oklahoma City was 26. There was no difference in average age between male and female. The average age of the general population of OSU-Oklahoma City students is 27.

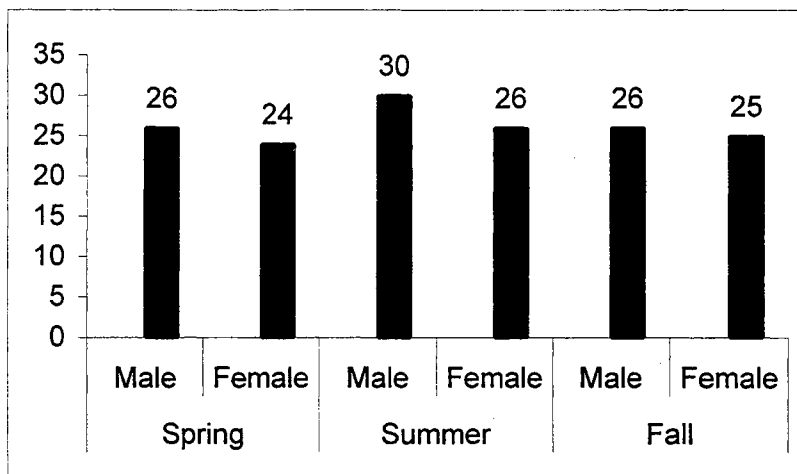


Figure 4. Average Age of Probationary Students Enrolled in Student Success Strategies

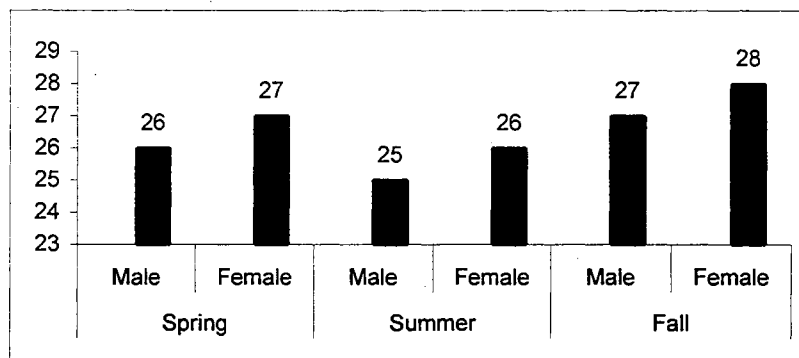


Figure 5. Average Age of Probationary Students Not Enrolled in Student Success Strategies

The completion of a Student Success Strategies course is only a partial requirement (when implemented) for AdCom students. This study is focused specifically to the student success course and does not take into account other factors in conjunction with the class such as tutoring, skills workshops, etc., that may have contributed to the students' success or failure.

Because of the institutional base of the population and sample, generalizing the findings beyond the participating two-year college is inappropriate.

Analysis

To calculate the t-test, the data was grouped by semester and by students who took the Student Success Strategies course and those students who did not take the Student Success Strategies course. A normal distribution was valid for all groups except the summer group which took the SSS course, which had less than 30 students (sample).

TABLE V shows the results of the t-test analysis.

TABLE V
RESULTS OF T-TEST ANALYSIS

| Semester | # of students | df | t calc | ta p=.05 | Accept Alt. Hypothesis |
|---------------|---------------|----|--------|----------|------------------------|
| Spring | | | | | |
| With SSS | 32 | 31 | 1.01 | 1.645 | No |
| W/O SSS | 81 | 80 | 1.75 | 1.645 | Yes |
| Summer | | | | | |
| With SSS | 20 | 19 | -0.36 | 1.729 | No |
| W/O SSS | 62 | 61 | -0.7 | 1.645 | No |
| Fall | | | | | |
| With SSS | 41 | 40 | -1.04 | 1.645 | No |
| W/O SSS | 65 | 64 | -1.46 | 1.645 | No |

SSS: Student Success Strategies

df: degrees of freedom (sample size minus 1)

t calc: t value calculated

ta, p=.05: table value showing 95% certainty

Results

Spring – Students who took the Student Success Strategies course.

With the information provided, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, therefore there is insufficient data to support the alternative hypothesis. There was no significant increase in grade point average for those probationary students who took the student success class.

Spring – Students who did not take the Student Success Strategies course.

Although the grade point average of this group was still below 2.0, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that there was a statistically significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who did not take the student success class.

Summer – Students who took the Student Success Strategies course. The t value is less than t-alpha. Test failed to reject the null hypothesis. There was insufficient evidence to support a statistically significant increase in the grade point average of students who took the student success course in the summer of 2000.

Summer – Students who did not take the Student Success Strategies course. The t-test failed to reject the null hypothesis therefore insufficient evidence was available to support a significant increase in the grade point average of the students who did not take the student success course.

Fall – Student who took the Student Success Strategies course. The t-test failed to reject the null hypothesis. Insufficient evidence was available to support a significant increase in the grade point average of these students.

Fall – Students who did not take the Student Success Strategies course. The t-test failed to reject the null hypothesis, therefore there was insufficient data to support any increase in the grade point average of those fall students who did not take the course.

Outcomes of the Student Success Strategies Course in
Terms of Probationary Students' Improved Grade
Point Average

Attainment of letter grade of “C” (2.0) or better for Student Success Strategies:

- Spring 2000 – 43% male; 40% female;
- Summer 2000 – 38% male; 46% female; and
- Fall 2000 – 55 % male; 45% female.

Improvement in the cumulative/retention grade point average of students who took the SSS course was reflected in each of the three semesters:

- 83% of the conditionally admitted students for spring 2000 improved; their cumulative grade point average to 2.0 or better;
- 61% of the conditionally admitted students for summer 2000 improved their cumulative grade point average to 2.0 or better; and
- 42% of the conditionally admitted students for fall 2000 improved their cumulative grade point average to 2.0 or better.

While the data reflect an improvement in probationary students' grade point average, there was no significant improvement in the grade point average of the students who enrolled in the Student Success Strategies course. The question still exists, “is the course an effective intervention tool for probationary students?” Additional data

collection and analysis is warranted to more fully understand the impact the course has on the success of students.

Based on grade point average attainment and retention alone, students who were conditionally admitted in the fall semester did not fare as well academically as students who were admitted in the spring semester and the summer session. However, looking at all three semesters, the percentage of probationary students who earned a 2.0 G.P.A. or above would be considered positive. Fifty percent of the students admitted on probation for the spring semester earned a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average. Summer and fall students performed better, with 61% of the students in each semester earning a 2.0 G.P.A. or better (Figure 6).

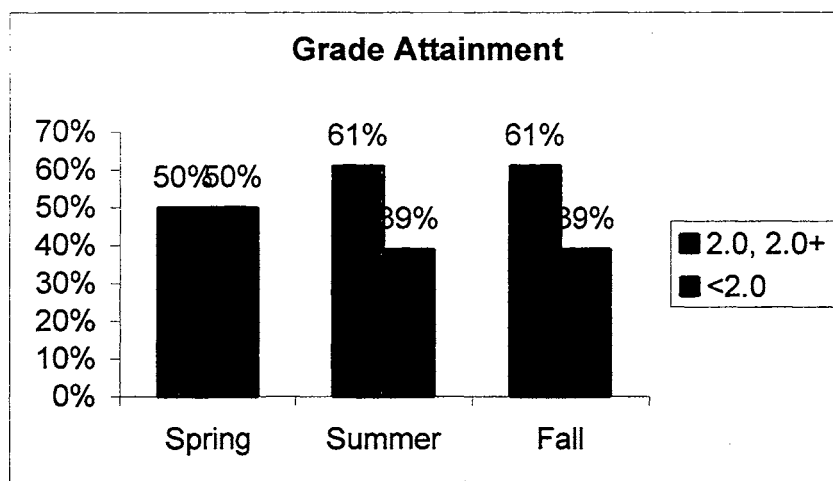


Figure 6. Grade Attainment

Outcomes of the Student Success Course In Terms of Student Retention

Retention and overall grade point average of students who earned high marks for the Student Success Strategies class was improved:

- 94% of the students who earned the letter grade of “A” for Student Success Strategies earned at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average for their next semester; and
- 75% of the students who earned the letter grade of “A” for Student Success Strategies continued to earn at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average for two semesters after the successful completion of that class.

While students’ grades were not being significantly impacted by the Student Success Strategies course, the rate at which the students returned to campus might indicate that the Admissions Committee intervention and the course did contribute to the retention of these at-risk students. The retention rate was greater for students who enrolled in Student Success Strategies for the spring and summer semesters (Figure 7).

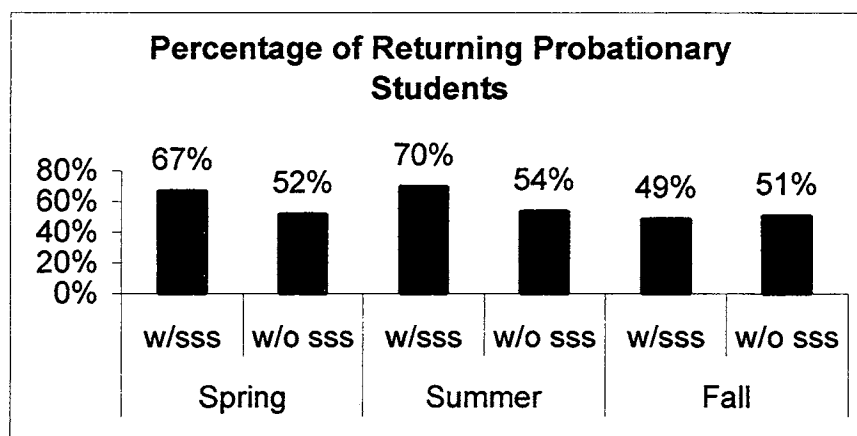


Figure 7. Percentage of Returning Students – Students With Student Success Strategies (w/SSS) and Students Without Student Success Strategies (w/o SSS)

Spring 2000

- 67% of students who took Student Success Strategies returned the semester following their first semester on probation
- 52% of students who did not take Student Success Strategies returned the semester following their first semester on probation

Summer 2000

- 70% of students who took Student Success Strategies returned the semester following their first semester on probation
- 54% of students who did not take Student Success Strategies returned the semester following their first semester on probation

Fall 2000

- 49% of students who took Student Success Strategies returned the semester following their first semester on probation
- 51% of students who did not take Student Success Strategies returned the semester following their first semester on probation

Retention improved for students who enrolled in Student Success Strategies:

- 66% of the conditionally admitted students for Spring 2000 returned to continue their studies the following summer session or next regular semester (fall)
- 66% of the conditionally admitted students for Summer 2000 returned to continue their studies the following semester (fall)
- 44% of the conditionally admitted students for Fall 2000 returned to continue their studies the following semester (spring)

As shown in Figure 7, retention rates do appear better for the group of students who enrolled in Student Success Strategies in the spring semester and summer session; however, students conditionally admitted in the fall semester, who enrolled in Student

Success Strategies, did not perform as well as those coming in for the spring and summer semesters. Because there were so few students who actually enrolled in the course, there was not enough data to make any definitive conclusions. Further examination of the differences reflected between the fall semester and the spring and summer sessions is warranted. The reason for the inconsistency is not evident at this time.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

While there are many strategies in place to assist students in their quest for academic success, continued research, revision and implementation of intervention and retention strategies are necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to provide a closer look at the at-risk student group of probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City. The course offering, Student Success Strategies, has been an intervention for helping probationary students. The researcher wanted to document characteristics of the group, the number of probationary students who enrolled in the course, and the impact the course had on the group of students, if any.

The findings of the study will provide useful information as Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City reviews, revises, creates and implements future intervention and retention strategies.

Hypotheses

1. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
2. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
3. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.
4. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course at OSU-Oklahoma City.

Research Questions

The four broad questions which guided this study were:

1. What are the characteristics of OSU-Oklahoma City probationary students?
2. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?
3. Is there a significant increase in the grade point average of probationary students who do not take the Student Success Strategies course?
4. Is retention improved for probationary students who take the Student Success Strategies course?

Summary of the Findings

Characteristics of the Probationary Students

The population of probationary students is relatively small compared to the overall student enrollment – only four percent of the total enrollment for the calendar year of 2000. Of that four percent only little more than a quarter of those students took advantage of the Student Success Strategies course that had been identified as an intervention for at-risk students.

The average age of 26 for probationary students, male and female, was consistent with the average age of 27 for the campus as a whole. The age range for this group was 21-57, not surprising since all of these students had attended college long enough to corrupt their academic record. Many of the older students of this group had been absent from college for a year or more.

For the three semesters in the year of 2000, the average percentage of male students was fifty-nine percent; compared to the average percentage for female students reflected with forty-one percent.

Probationary students differ somewhat from the whole campus population with regards to gender. Campus demographics reflect female students comprise fifty-seven percent of the total population with male students making up the other forty-three percent. During the spring and fall semesters in 2000, more male students were classified as probationary. The summer semester, however, reflected a greater number of female students classified as probationary.

The top four “feeder” colleges of students on probationary status are the University of Central Oklahoma, Rose State College, Oklahoma City Community College and Oklahoma State University.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to look more closely at the probationary students at OSU-Oklahoma City, to identify characteristics of the group, to determine if those characteristics were any different from the rest of the student body, and whether the Student Success Strategies course was a successful tool in the improvement of grade point average of probationary students.

Results of the statistical analysis of the improvement of grade point average did not indicate that the Student Success Strategies course has any significant impact on the grade point average of probationary students. In one semester (spring) students who did not take the course did show a significant increase in their grade point average.

Cumulative grade point average for probationary students was higher for students who had enrolled in Student Success Strategies for the spring semester and summer session; however, students enrolled in the fall semester achieved a lower GPA than their counterparts who did not enroll in Student Success Strategies. The reasons for this discrepancy are unknown and further study is suggested to determine potential causes.

The OSU-Oklahoma City Student Success Strategies course has all of the elements other studies have indicated to be effective in the improvement of student achievement and retention. Instructors are selected on their skills and abilities to work well with at-risk students as the literature suggests. The probationary student group

differs very little from the whole student population. As the college administrators, faculty and staff continue to hone their knowledge and understanding of the nontraditional student group that seeks a higher education, intervention programs will improve with positive results for the individual students as well as the institution.

Recommendations

As a result of conducting this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- The academic unit in charge (The Learning Center) of the SSS course offering should research further the academic success of all students who take Student Success Strategies, not just probationary students;
- A survey should be administered through the Office of Institutional Research to identify all of the results, success or failure, of existing OSU-Oklahoma City strategies and programs aimed at improving the status of probationary students;
- On-going tracking of the grade point average and retention of probationary students should be implemented by the Admissions Committee;
- Further study to determine what, if any, intervention positively impacts the grade point average of probationary students;
- The Admissions Committee and other academic advisors should adhere to the requirement that all probationary students enroll in Student Success Strategies
- Institutional Research and Academic Affairs should implement a satisfaction survey to students enrolled in Student Success Strategies

- A similar study of students classified as probationary since the year 2000 should be conducted by The Learning Center.
- Campus advisors should continue using the Student Success Strategies course as an intervention for at-risk students

College students are faced with many challenges as they maneuver through the higher education experience. It is the responsibility of college personnel to identify successful programs and services that assist the students in meeting those challenges – to arm those individuals with the skills and attitudes that promote success in college and life in general.

The study of intervention for at at-risk students and retention strategies is a dynamic area. Theories abound, but with every year, enormous changes occur within the higher education realm. As the demographic profile of the “typical” college student continues to change, it is imperative that colleges and universities continue to assess existing programs. Programs and strategies must change and evolve with the times to provide an always-improving learning community for our students.

Documentation of the success and/or relevance of programs aimed at student retention at OSU-Oklahoma City has not been studied to any great extent. It is imperative that the progress and success of our students be evaluated - that we work diligently to improve those programs and services that do contribute to student success.

Because of the ever-changing nature of college students and the higher education community, there will never be a “perfect” strategy for student success and retention. New programs will be implemented that will proactively assist and challenge students to be more successful in the college environment. Those programs will then be evaluated,

improved upon, revised. Successful programs of intervention are only as successful as the students who derive benefit from those programs and experience success at the collegiate level.

This study has provided an initial review and evaluation of an at-risk group of students and an intervention strategy, the AdCom process and the Student Success Strategies course and its impact on G.P.A. and student retention. Additional research, to include surveys and interviews that addresses the following questions raised by this study might include questions about student motivation toward higher education and what types of help do the students want and/or need from the institution to assist them in being successful.

The continued assessment and improvement of the student success and retention programs is warranted and necessary in the OSU-Oklahoma City quest for improved student retention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arendale, D. (1998). Learning and teaching in the 21st century: Seven habits of highly effective developmental educators. Presented at the 17th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Educators, Pittsburg, PA.

Ashar, H., & Skenes, R. (1993). Can Tinto's model be applied to nontraditional students? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 43, 90-100.

Aslanian, C. (2001). You're never too old...excerpts from adult students today. *Community College Journal*, 71(5), 56-58.

Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Auburn University Retention Committee. *University Retention Committee Report*. (On-line). Available at <http://www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/99retrep.html> (June 7, 1999).

Bean, J. P. and Metzner, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research*, 55, 485-540.

Behrens, T. T., Newlon, B. JK., & Duran, R. (1995) *Facilitating the development of social interest as an intervention with at-risk career counseling clients* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 387 726).

Beck, C. (1996). Factors leading to academic success at a community college after scholastic probation or dismissal. Ed.D. dissertation, The University of San Francisco.

Borglum, K. & Kubala, T. (2000). Academic and social integration of community college students: A case study. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24, (7), 567-577.

Boylan, H. (1997). Developmental education: History of implications. Presented at the 16th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Educators, Pittsburg, PA.

Boylan, H. (1999). Exploring alternatives to remediation. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 22 (3),6-8.

Brotherton, P., (2001). It takes a campus to graduate a student. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 18 (19), 34-43.

Brunsdon, V., Davies, M., Shevlin, M., & Bracken, M. (2000). Why do HE students drop out? A test of Tinto's model. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 24 (3), 301-310.

Burley, H., Butner, B. & Edjda, B. (2001). Dropout and stopout patterns among developmental education students in Texas community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 25 (10), 767-782. Washington, D. C.: Taylor & Francis.

Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (1996). *The American Community College*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Coffman, E. (2000). Making the grade. *Campus Life*, Feb 2000, 58(7), 38-42.

Cohen, D. A. (1991). Overcoming student apathy and bewilderment: Setting an example of responsibility and attentiveness. *Proteus*, 8 (1), 27-29.

Coleman, H. L. K. & Freedman, A. M. (1996). Effects of a structured group intervention on the achievement of academically at-risk undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37 (6), 631-636. Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association.

Cuvo, A. J., Freeman, M. M., Canavin, M. B., & Bryson, S. L. (1986). Conditions of appointment compliance for students on academic probation. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 27 (1), 56-64.

David, L. M. (1988). *Gaining Faculty and Administrative Support for Student Success Courses*. Rapid City, SD: College Survival, Inc.

Demitroff, J. F. (1974). Student Persistence. *College and University*, 49, 553-567.

Dunwoody, P. T., & Frank, M. L. (1995). Why students withdraw from classes. *The Journal of Psychology*, 553.

Durden, G. C., & Ellis, L. V. (1995). The effects of attendance on student learning in principles of economics. *The American Economic Review*, 85 (2), 343-346.

Durkheim, E. (1961). *Suicide* (J. Spaulding & G. Simpson, trans.). Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Ender, K. L., Chand, S., & Thornton, J. S. (1996). Student affairs in the community college: Promoting student success and learning. *New Directions for Student Services, Fall 1996* (75), 45-53. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Evelyn, J. (2001). A community college offers directions for the road of life. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 48* (7), A14-17.

Feldman, R. S. (2000). *P.O.W.E.R. Learning: Strategies for success in college and life*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Fink, D. & Carrasquillo, C. (1994). Managing student retention in the community college. Paper presented at "Leadership 2000," the Annual International Conference of the League for Innovation in the Community College and the Community College Leadership Program, San Diego, CA.

Fralick, M. A. (1993). College success: A study of positive and negative attrition. *Community College Review, 20* (5), 29-39

Garnett, D. T. (1990). Retention strategies for high-risk students at a four-year university. *NACADA Journal, 10* (1), 22-25. Seattle, WA: The Association.

Garrett, H. E. (1962). *Elementary Statistics*. New York, NY: David McKay Company, Inc.

Grimes, S. K. (1997). Underprepared community college students: Characteristics, persistence and academic success. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, 21* (1), 47-57.

Hadden, C. (2000). The ironies of mandatory placement. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, Dec 2000, 24* (10), 823-839.

Hagedorn, L. S., Pascarella, E. T., Edison, M., Braxton, J., Nora, A. & Terenzini, P. T. (1999). Institutional context and the development of critical thinking: A research note. *The Review of Higher Education, 22* (3), 265-285. Charlottesville, VA: The Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Henry, T. C. & Smith, G. P. (1994). Planning student success and persistence: Implementing a state system strategy. *Community College Review, 22* (2), 26-37.

Heerman, C. E. & Maleki, R. B. (1994). Helping probationary university students succeed. *Journal of Reading, 37*(8), 654-661.

Hodum, R. L. & Martin, O. L. (1994). An examination of college retention rates with a university 101 program. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Education Research Association, Nashville, TN.

Horn, C., Bruning, R., Schraw, G., Curry, E. & Katkanant, C. (1993). Paths to success in the college classroom. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 18 (4), 464-478. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Kajstura, A. & Keim, M. C. (1992). Reverse transfer students in Illinois community colleges. *Community College Review*, 20 (2), 39-45.

Kalsner, L. (1991). Issues in college student retention. *Higher Education Extension Service Review*, 3(1).

Key, J. P. (1996). *Research Design*. Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University.

Lemoncelli, J. J., & Leonard, J. (1990). *An intervention program for high risk undergraduate students: A unique collaborative practicum experience*. Scranton, PA: Marywood College (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 348 122).

Levitz, R., & Hovland, M. (1998) Dropout prone students. *Power Strategies for Recruitment and Retention Workshop Notebook*. Iowa City, IA: Noel-Levitz.

Levitz, R.S., Noel, L. & Richter, B. J. (1999). Strategic moves for retention success. *New Directions for Higher Education*, Winter 1999 (108), 31-50. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lipsky, S. A. & Ender, S. C. (1990). Impact of a study skills course on probationary students' academic performance. *Journal of the Freshman Year Experience*, 2, 7-15.

Liu, E. & Liu, R. (1999). An application of Tinto's model at a commuter campus. *Education*, 119 (3) 537-543.

Lucas, J. A. (1991). *Evaluation of new probation intervention program at Harper College*. Palatine, IL: William Rainey Harper College (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 348 122).

Malm, N.W. (1999). Student retention in the community college: The faculty role. *Visions, The Journal of Applied Research for the Florida Association of Community Colleges*, 15-23. Tallahassee, FL.

Marks, E. (1967). Student perceptions of college persistence, and their intellectual, personality and performance correlates. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 58, 210-221.

Masland, A. T. (1991). Organizational culture in the study of higher education. *Organization and Governance in Higher Education*, (4th ed.), edited by M. W. Peterson, E. E. Chafee, and T. H. White, 118, 25. ASHE Reader. Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.

McClenney, B. N. (2000). Remediation is everyone's responsibility. *Community College Week*, 13 (3), 2-6.

Miller, T. (1981). The call-in letter. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 22, 451-452.

Murtaugh, P. A., Burns, L. D., & Schuster, J. (1999). Predicting the retention of university students. *Human Sciences Press, Inc.* (40) 3, 355-371. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press, Etc.

Napoli, A. R. (1996). Psychosocial factors related to retention and early departure of two-year community college students (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1996). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 57.

Napoli, A. R. & Wortman, P. M. (1998). Psychosocial factors related to retention and early departure of two-year community college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 39(4), 419-455. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press, Inc.

Neeley, R. O. & Alm, D. (1999). Meeting individual needs: A learning styles success story. *Community College Review* 27 (2), 26-51.

Newton, F. B. (1990). Academic support seminars: A program to assist students experiencing academic difficulty. *Journal of College Student Development*, 31, 183-186.

Noel, L., Levitz, R., Saluri, D. & Associates.(1985). *Increasing Student Retention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Oklahoma Higher Education (2001). *Remediation Reports*. Available: <http://okhighered.org/reports/remediation-reports.html>

Oklahoma Higher Education (2002). *Faculty and Staff Positions Head List of Items Cut from College Budgets*. Available: <http://www.okhighered.org/hwhatsnew/archives/retention-recommend.html>

Oklahoma Higher Education (2002). *Task Force Reports Retention and Graduation Findings, Makes Recommendations*. Available: <http://www.okhighered.org/whatsnew/archives/retention-recommend.html>

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2000) *Academic Probation and Suspension: Impact Study of Retention Policy, June 2000*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. (2001). Annual student remediation report. March 2001. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City (1999). *Catalog 1999-2000*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City Office of Enrollment Management.

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City (2001). *Catalog 2002*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City Office of Enrollment Management.

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City (2002). *Spring 2002 enrollment report, census February 4*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City Institutional Research.

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City (2002). *Spring 2002 student profile*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City Institutional Research.

Olson, M. A. (1990). Characteristics of students on academic probation. *Community/Junior College*, 14 (4), 331-336. Washington, D. C.: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Padilla, R. V.(1999). College student retention: Focus on success. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 1(2), 131-45.

Palmer, P. J. (1997, November/December). The heart of a teacher: Identity and integrity in teaching. *Change*, 15-21.

Parker, C. E. (1998). Getting serious about retention. *Community College Week*, 11 (4), 4-6.

Parnell, D. (1990). *Dateline 2000: The new education agenda*. Washington, DC: The Community College Press.

Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. (1979). Interaction effects in Spady's and Tinto's conceptual models of college dropout. *Sociology of Education*, 52, 197-210.

Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. (1980). Predicting persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from a theoretical model. *Journal of Higher Education*, 51 (1), 60-75.

Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. T. (1998). Studying college students in the 21st century: Meeting new challenges. *The Review of Higher Education*. 21 (2), 151-165. Charlottesville, VA: The Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Peterman, D. S. (2000). Retention in the community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24 (1), 865-871.

Ramirez, G. M. & Evans, R. J. (1998). Solving the probation puzzle: A student affirmative action program. *NACADA Journal*, 8 (2), 34-45. Seattle, WA: The Association.

Reverse transfer students in Illinois community colleges. (1992). *Community College Review*, 20 (2), 39-45.

Rickenson, B. (1998). The relationship between undergraduate student counseling and successful degree completion. *Studies in Higher Education*, March 1998, 23 (1), 95-103

Robinson, D. G., Burns, C. F. & Gaw, K. F. (1996). Orientation programs: A foundation for student learning and success. *New Directions for Student Services*, 75, 55-68.

Ross, C. M. (1992). A study of academic and social integration in predicting student persistence at a residential-two-year college. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1992). Dissertation Abstracts International, 53.

Roueche, J. (1993). Between a rock and hard place: The at-risk student in the open-door college. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Roueche, J. E. & Baker III, G. A. (1997). *Access & Excellence: The Open-door College*. Washington, DC: The Community College Press.

Roueche, J. E., Roueche, S. D., & Ely, E. E. (2001). Pursuing excellence: The community college of Denver. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 25, 517-537

Rummel, A., Acton, D, Costello, S. & Pielow G. (1999). Is all retention good? An empirical study. *College Student Journal*, 33 (2), 241-247

Santa Rita, E. (1995). Utilizing solution-focused counseling for students on academic probation. *Journal of College Student Psychology*, 10 (2), 39-53.

Shapiro, S. R. & Livingston, J. A. (2000) Dynamic self-regulation: The driving force behind academic achievement. *Innovative Higher Education*, 25 (1), 23-35. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press.

Shavelson, R. J. (1996). *Statistical Reasoning for the Behavioral Sciences*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Spady, W. (1970). Dropouts from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. *Interchange*, 1, 64-85.

Spann, M. G. & Calderwood, B. J. (1998). Increasing student success: An interview with Edward A. Morante. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 22 (1), 16 – 20.

Stern, D. & Briggs, D. (2001). Changing admissions policies. *Change*, Jan/Feb2001, 33 (1), 34-42.

Stoval, M. (2000). Using success courses for promoting persistence and completion. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2000 (112), 45-54. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Swift, J. S. (1989). Academic probation, suspension, and the adult student. *NACADA Journal* (9), 2, 76-85. Seattle, WA: The Association.

Sydow, D. L. & Sandel, R. H. (1998). Making student retention an institutional priority. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 22 (7), 635-644..

Tinto, V., (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V., Russo, P., & Kadel, S. (1994) Constructing educational communities: increasing retention in challenging circumstances. *Community College Journal (AACCC)*, 64 (4), 26-29..

Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2), 167-177. Charlottesville, VA: The Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Trombley, C. M. (2000). Evaluating students on probation and determining intervention strategies: A comparison of probation and good standing students. *Junior College Student Retention*, 2 (3), 239-251. Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Company.

Tuckman, B. W. (1988). *Conducting Educational Research*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Weinsheimer, J. D. (1993). *Turning point: Getting off probation and on with your education*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Walzelek, B.G. & Coulter, L. P. (1999). The role of counseling services for students in academic jeopardy: A preliminary study. *Journal of College Counseling*, 2 (1), 33-42.

Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research Methods in Education*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Winter, P. A. & Harris, Michael R. (1999). Community college reverse transfer students: A field survey of a nontraditional student group. *Community College Review*, 27 (1), 13-30.

Wolfe, R. F. (1998). A model retention program for the community college. *Maryland Association for Higher Education Journal*, 11, 18-20. Available at <http://www.unkc.edu/centers/cad/si/sidocs/rw2yr88.htm>

Wright, S. S. (2000). Raising at-risk student success rates. *The Michigan Community College Journal*, 6(1), 59-67. Livonia, MI: Schoolcraft College.

APPENDIX
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 3/27/03

Date: Friday, March 29, 2002

IRB Application No ED0287

Proposal Title: CHARACTERISTICS OF, AND INTERVENTION FOR OSU-OKLAHOMA CITY
PROBATIONARY STUDENTS

Principal
Investigator(s):

Jo Ella Fields
508 Taylor NW
Piedmont, OK 73078

Mary Kutz
319 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved *

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,


Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

*NOTE: While you do disclose publicly the prerogative of faculty and staff to access students' records, be mindful of all federal and state laws pertaining to privacy of records.

VITA 

Jo Ella Fields

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY – OKLAHOMA CITY
PROBATIONARY STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND THE EFFECT OF
A STUDENT SUCCESS COURSE ON GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Leesville High School, Leesville, Louisiana in May, 1967; attended McNeese State College, Lake Charles, Louisiana, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana and OSU-Oklahoma City, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Received Bachelor of Science degree in General Studies from Central State University (now University of Central Oklahoma), Edmond, Oklahoma, in July, 1986. Received Master of Science degree with a major in Natural and Applied Science from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1992. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Applied Educational Studies at Oklahoma State University in May, 2002.

Experience: Employed by Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City since 1980. Currently hold position of Director of The Learning Center and Adjunct Faculty member at OSU-Oklahoma City. Previous positions at the college include Director of Training and Development; Interim Director Admissions, Counseling and Assessment; Director of Enrollment Management; Assistant Director of Admissions; and Coordinator of Student Recruitment and Student Activities.

Professional Memberships: Member, Board of Directors, North Metro Area Council of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of commerce; Co-chair, Business and Education Partnering Committee, North Metro Area Council of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce; Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation; American Association for Women in Community Colleges.