

Winter 2012

## The Expected Adjustment and Academic Outcomes of Honors College Students

Christina R. Washington  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/chs\\_etds](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/chs_etds)



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Washington, Christina R.. "The Expected Adjustment and Academic Outcomes of Honors College Students" (2012). Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Dissertation, Counseling & Human Services, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/8t8g-ts88  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/chs\\_etds/106](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/chs_etds/106)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Counseling & Human Services at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Counseling & Human Services Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

**THE EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF HONORS  
COLLEGE STUDENTS**

by

Christina R. Washington  
B.S., May 2001, The College of William and Mary  
M.S.Ed, May 2009, Old Dominion University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COUNSELING

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
December 2012

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Alan Schwitzer (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Grothaus (Member)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tisha Paredes (Member)

## ABSTRACT

### THE EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF HONORS COLLEGE STUDENTS

Christina R. Washington  
Old Dominion University, 2012  
Chair: Dr. Alan Schwitzer

The transition to an institution of higher education can present challenges and difficulties, but it is a student's expectations that can ultimately predict adjustment (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 2000). A larger number of students who experience difficulties in their adjustment end up withdrawing from the institution (Baker & Siryk, 1986). There is evidence that for some students there is a vast disconnect between their expectations regarding the institution of higher education, and the reality of their experiences. Students may not realize that what was expected of them in high school will differ greatly in college. It is this lack of understanding of the different expectations that can lead students to struggle academically, and can affect adjustment (Kern, Fagley, & Miller, 1998). Studies indicate that students who entered college with unrealistically high expectations were less successful academically than students with lower, but more accurate grade expectations (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). High achieving college students may face unique challenges related to their overall adjustment (Rice, Leever, Christopher, & Porter, 2006). These challenges may also affect students' expectations regarding adjustment. The current study followed a non-experimental ex post facto design. Data collected from the *Transition to College Inventory* was analyzed to assess expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment of honors students and non-honors students. Additionally, the study examined expected adjustment and participation in honors programming as predictors of academic success and retention status. A random sample of Honors College

students and non-honors students ( $N = 393$ ) was utilized for the current study. Results indicate that there was a significant difference between honors students and non-honors student reports' on expected adjustment. Additionally, factor 2 (Influences in college choice), and the group the student belonged to (honors vs. non-honors) were most influential in predicating first semester academic success.

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother Hattie Mae, and mother Ellinor. Thank you for always believing in me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
BACKGROUND .....	1
FOUR ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT .....	3
EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT AND ITS IMPORTANCE .....	5
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS.....	6
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	8
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	9
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	10
OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY .....	11
LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS .....	12
ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY .....	13
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS .....	13
SUMMARY .....	16
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	17
COLLEGE STUDENT ADJUSTMENT.....	17
ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT.....	19
SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT .....	22
PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT.....	24
INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT .....	25

EXPECTATION FULFILLMENT VS EXPECTATION DISILLUSIONMENT.....	27
USING EXPECTATIONS AS A PROXY FOR MEASURED ADJUSTMENT ....	27
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS AND ADJUSTMENT.....	29
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT .....	30
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS AND PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT .....	35
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT .....	36
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT .....	38
BIG-FISH-LITTLE-POND-EFFECT.....	38
INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT .....	40
ADJUSTMENT OUTCOMES OF HONORS COLLEGES .....	41
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT STUDY.....	44
HC INTERVENTION FOR HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS AT ODU.....	44
MEASURING ADJUSTMENT EXPECTATIONS AT ODU USING THE TCI ...	45
CURRENT STUDY.....	47
HYPOTHESES .....	48
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHOD .....</b>	<b>49</b>
RATIONALE.....	49
HYPOTHESES .....	52
RESEARCH DESIGN .....	53
PARTICIPANTS .....	55
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW .....	56
INSTRUMENTATION .....	57
ADAPTING THE TCI TO THE FOUR ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT.....	59

DATA ANALYSIS.....	67
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....</b>	<b>71</b>
REVIEW OF STUDY.....	71
DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS.....	74
DATA ANALYSIS.....	78
SUMMARY.....	83
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>84</b>
EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	85
ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND LEVELS OF EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT.....	87
RETENTION AND LEVELS OF EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT .....	92
LIMITATIONS .....	93
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .....	93
IMPLICATIONS .....	96
OVERALL SUMMARY .....	98
ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....	98
COLLEGE COUNSELORS .....	99
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>APPENDIX A.....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>VITA.....</b>	<b>133</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. RESEARCH QUESTION AND DATA ANALYSIS .....	52
2. ADJUSTMENT DEFINITION AND CORRESPONDING TCI ITEMS .....	61
3. FINAL RECODING OF VARIABLES WITHIN DATASET .....	72
4. DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS .....	75
5. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF FACTORS .....	76
6. UNIVARIATE STATISTICS FOR HONORS VS. NON-HONORS .....	79
7. GROUP AND EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT PREDICTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS ..	80
8. GROUP AND EXPECTED ADJUSTMENT PREDICTING RETENTION .....	82

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

The transition from high school to an institution of higher education can present students with challenges that go beyond the expected difficulties related to the rigors of academic study. This transition consists of challenges in emotional, academic, and social adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1984). The number of high school graduates planning to attend higher education institutions is steadily increasing. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006), over 68% of high school students in 2005 enrolled in some form of higher education within 4 months of their graduation. Unfortunately, while the numbers of students entering higher institutions continues to increase, persistence, which is an indicator of success for these institutions, remains problematic (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999). In fact, according to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2009), only six out of ten students at four-year institutions actually go on to earn their degrees. Therefore, retention is an important college counseling concern.

Retention is a complex issue comprising personal, societal, and institutional factors and each can have detrimental implications (Brunsden, Davies, & Bracken, 2000). According to Tinto (1993), the monetary, occupational, and other societal rewards of higher education are closely linked to earning a college degree. Bean (1990) also presents a description of the financial aspects of student attrition:

“For individuals, departure from college before graduating can represent a personal failure to achieve educational objectives, an income about 15 % below that of contemporaries who graduate from college, and the opportunity cost

of an investment that will yield little financial benefit” (p. 170).

The attrition rate mentioned earlier, while concerning, is often a result of adjustment difficulties (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Rickinson & Rutherford, 1995). College student adjustment and academic success have been directly linked to student retention. A larger number of students who experience difficulties in their adjustment end up withdrawing from the institution (Baker & Siryk, 1986). The complexities pertaining to retention can have negative effects for students in the form of unrealized personal and educational goals. It is for these reasons counselors and college administrators are especially concerned with retention.

The demands placed on students as they make the transition from high school to higher education institutions vary. There is evidence that for some students there is a vast disconnect between their expectations regarding the institution of higher education, and the reality of their experiences. Students may not realize that what was expected of them in high school will differ greatly in college. According to Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, and Alisat (2000), students with more complex expectations about their transition to these institutions were better adjusted than the students whose expectations were simple and one-dimensional. It is this lack of understanding of the different expectations that can lead students to struggle academically, and can affect adjustment (Kern, Fagley, & Miller, 1998). According to Smith & Wertlieb (2005), students who entered college with unrealistically high expectations were less successful academically than students with lower, but more accurate grade expectations. Accordingly, it is these expectations that can ultimately influence, and are closely tied to, adjustment.

### **Four Aspects of Adjustment**

Baker and Siryk (1984) developed a conceptual model in which adjustment is conceptualized as consisting of four distinct components. In combination, the four components inform the concept known as overall adjustment. The four components are academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986), in their effort to conceptualize a student's adjustment to college, devised a reliable and valid instrument known as the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Baker and Siryk (1986), suggested that “ the data from the scale made possible an easy and comfortable approach to, and productive discussion of, the topic of a student's adjustment to college” (p. 34). It is from this data that Baker and Siryk's conceptual model of adjustment was derived. Researchers in Baker and Siryk's (1986) study interviewed students with the purpose of examining the congruence between items on the scale and what had been occurring in the student's adjustment to college. According to Baker and Siryk (1986), the instrument's descriptions were seen by the students as accurate representations of what they had been experiencing in college.

Although the four aspects of adjustment in the model are distinct entities, there is evidence that for students, one aspect of adjustment can have an affect the other aspects. The academic adjustment component, according to Baker and Siryk, speaks to the student's ability to adjust to the academic demands that are consistent with study required at an institution of higher education (1984 & 1986). This includes having a positive attitude toward setting and completing academic goals and coursework. According to Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) students who perceive themselves as being able to adapt

to the intellectual demands of an institution of higher education were more academically adjusted. There is also evidence that students have a tendency to overestimate their abilities to adjust academically (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

According to Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986), the social adjustment component focuses on the student's ability to adapt to the social demands in the college environment, such as participation in social activities, meeting new people, and coping with being away from home. Social adjustment is very important for students as they transition to university and begin the process of individuation from their families and previous support systems (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak & Cribbie, 2007). Friedlander et al. (2007) found that even though students encounter many stressors during their first year of college, social support is a protective factor. Adding to this research, friendships were examined and the findings indicated that friendships were not only related to social adjustment, but had an effect on feelings of attachment to the institution of higher education and academic adjustment (Buote et al., 2007). While research has emphasized the importance of friendships, it also indicates that students have a tendency to overestimate their ability to adjust socially (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

The personal-emotional adjustment component, according to Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986), speaks to the students' ability to cope with the psychological and physical stressors that are characteristic of the college environment. It also pertains to the level of psychological distress experienced by the student during the adjustment process. Students who decide to leave universities during their first semester often cite emotional reasons as being the major cause of their departure (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). This can be linked to the interrelatedness of the

different components of adjustment. A student experiencing psychological or physical difficulties can be expected to experience difficulties adjusting academically, forming social relationships, and bonding with the institution. While students have a tendency to overestimate their abilities to adjust academically and socially, they underestimate their ability to make personal-emotional adjustments (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

Institutional adjustment has been described by Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986) as a student's bond with his or her institution, as well as a student's desire to persist at the institution. Social integration is closely related to institutional adjustment. Berger and Milem (1999) explained that students who were more socially integrated (developed close bonds with peers and faculty) felt a closer bond with their institution. This again underlies the idea of the experiences of adjustment as being related.

### **Expected Adjustment and Its Importance**

. While the transition to an institution of higher education can present challenges and difficulties, the extant literature indicates that a student's expectations can have an effect on his or her adjustment. According to Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, (2000), focusing on expectations is especially important due the fact that it is these expectations that can ultimately predict adjustment. It has also been found that students with unrealistically high expectations actually fared worse academically and socially than students with more realistic expectations (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005; Weissberg, Owen, Jenkins, & Harburg, 2003).

Early research focused on the idea of the "freshman myth", which describes difficulty in adjustment as stemming from the discrepancy between a student's expectations before he or she begins an institution of higher education and the realities of

the actual experience (Stern, 1966; p.413). The term “myth” was used to describe the idealism that encompasses students’ expectations about higher education institutions (Stern, 1966; p.413). Stern (1966) expressed the idea that these idealized expectations would never be able to live up to the reality, as the first weeks attending the institution were more challenging than students anticipated. Seeming to support the idea of the freshman myth, Lauterbach and Vielhaber (1966) indicated that students with idealistic expectations about an institution of higher education tended to perform worse academically and were more likely to withdraw from the institution. Smith and Wertlieb’s (2005), study confirmed previous findings which indicated that first-year students with lower expectations had slightly higher GPAs.

### **High-Achieving Students**

Essentially all students will face adjustment issues as they transition to a higher education institution, but high achieving college students may face unique challenges related to their overall adjustment (Rice, Leever, Christopher, & Porter, 2006). The unique challenges that high achievers or gifted students experience can include: perfectionism, anxiety and isolation, and multipotentiality (Hibbard & Davies, 2011; Vialle, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2007; Rinn & Plucker, 2004). These unique challenges may also have an effect on students’ expectations regarding adjustment. Gifted students in middle and high schools have long been grouped based on their ability (Marsh & Craven, 2000). Although theories exist concerning the effect this has on gifted students, little is known about the outcomes of ability grouping in the form of gifted programming for college students, and how this might relate to a student’s academic adjustment and success (Rinn, 2007). By assessing the differences that exist in the expected adjustment

of honors college students versus non-honors students, and how honors programming may influence these factors, this study will be able to address a topic which has produced contradictory findings. Marsh (1991) found that students attending high ability schools were more likely to select less demanding coursework, and have lower grade point averages than students attending lower ability schools. This finding would suggest that ability grouping is not beneficial to the academic adjustment and success of gifted students. Seeming to confirm this finding, Zeidner and Schleyer (1998), found that students in mixed ability classes had higher academic self-concepts, lower anxiety levels, and higher grades than students in high ability classes.

In a study conducted by Rinn (2007), an assessment was given to students to measure academic self-concept, academic achievement, and aspirations. Participants included gifted college students enrolled in an honors program and gifted students not enrolled in an honors program. The findings directly contradict the previous studies presented above in that the gifted students enrolled in the honors program had higher academic self-concepts than the gifted students not enrolled in the honors program. This finding would suggest that ability grouping is in fact beneficial to the academic adjustment and success of gifted college students.

Extending an understanding of how the expected adjustment of honors students differs from non-honors students, and the effect that honors programming has on academic adjustment and outcomes will further illuminate on the experiences of gifted college students. Extending this understanding also has the potential to assist counselors and university administrators in developing programming to better assist gifted college students experiencing adjustment difficulties.



### **Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this study was to examine the differences, if any, that exist between honors students and non-honors students in their expected adjustment to an institution of higher education, and to examine how participation in honors programming affects academic adjustment and success. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to (a) examine the differences in expected adjustment between honors students and non-honors students; (b) examine the extent to which the level of expected adjustment predicts first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students; and (c) examine the extent to which the level of expected adjustment predicts the retention status of honors students and non-honors students. The factors were the type of participant (honors versus non-honors), and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variables were the students' responses to the items on the TCI (factors one through eight), first semester success, and retention status. The levels of expected adjustment were measured using the Transition to College Inventory (TCI). The TCI is a noncognitive measure used to assist administrators and advisors at Old Dominion University in determining which students will face academic difficulty (Pickering, Calliotte, Macera, & Zerwas, n.d.). Noncognitive factors focus on a student's attitudes as opposed to cognitive factors such as high school grades, and college entrance exam scores (Pickering, Calliotte, & McAuliffe, 1992). The TCI was used on the basis of considerations of face validity, and the fact that the items align well with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment.

This study added to the limited research on high-achieving college students and the outcomes of participating in an honors college. Even though the existing literature

indicates that the experiences and expectations of high-achieving college students may differ when compared to other students, little research has focused on how gifted college students compare with other students with regard to expected adjustment (Hoge & Renzulli, 1993; Marsh, Chessor, Craven, & Roche, 1995). In turn, this study expanded on existing information regarding gifted college students by examining how and if they differ from non-honors students as it pertains to expected college adjustment, and whether honors programming predicts academic adjustment and success. The extant literature states that high achieving college students may face unique challenges related to their overall adjustment (Rice, Leever, Christopher, & Porter, 2006). Since the items on the TCI align well with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment, it may be a helpful tool to assist counselors and university administrators in developing strategies specific to this population of students.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions were addressed in this study. To answer the overarching concern regarding *How do honors students compare with non-honors students in expected adjustment and does expected adjustment and participation in the Honors College predict academic adjustment?* These three research questions are:

**RQ1:** To what extent are there statistically significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment?

**RQ2:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?

**RQ3:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students?

### **Significance of the Study**

According to Reis and Renzulli (2004), gifted students face added stressors that can have an effect on their adjustment and development. These stressors, which are unique to gifted students, include perfectionism anxiety, and isolation (Hibbard & Davies, 2011; Vialle, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2007). Each of these stressors can have an effect on a student's expectations and ability to adjust to college. The fact that college student adjustment is closely linked not only to attrition rates and academic success, but to a student's emotional development, makes this a very important issue for counselors and university administrators. The current study seeks to add to the literature regarding gifted students' expected adjustment to college, and how participating in honors programming influences academic adjustment and success. This is specific to the field of counselor education in that it will directly address the adjustment needs of this understudied population. Implications from this study could potentially assist college counselors and university administrators in developing programming and initiatives to better assist high achieving students as they cope with adjustment concerns unique to this population.

## Overview of Methodology

This study utilized a non-experimental ex post facto design in which archival data was examined between the years of 2007 and 2010. The data was collected through the *Transition to College Inventory*, or TCI (see Appendix A), which has been used at Old Dominion University since 1993 with the specific purpose of identifying students who may be in danger of experiencing academic difficulty. In the current study, the data collected from the TCI was analyzed to assess expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. The TCI is administered to all incoming first year students the summer prior to their first semester at Old Dominion University. The TCI was developed to identify students who may experience academic difficulty which could later lead to a withdrawal from the institution (Pickering et al., n.d.). The TCI was designed based on the research related to the effects of noncognitive factors on academic difficulty and withdrawal from the institution (Pickering et al., n.d.). While the TCI was developed to assess a student's potential risks for academic difficulty, the items are also consistent with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment. The format of the TCI requires students, using self report, to assess their attitudes, personality, and behaviors in high school and also requires them to make predictions about their expected performance in college. The inventory is made up of 116 items, and is related to the following: Reasons for attending college, Reasons for Choosing this College, Experiences During the Senior Year of High School, Self Ratings of Abilities and Traits, Attitudes About Being a College Student, Predictions About Academic Success at College, Predictions About Involvement in College. Participants in this study consisted of a random sample of 200 first year Honors College students and a random sample of 200

non-honors students. A priori power analysis was conducted to determine the number of participants needed to lead to statistically significant results. Utilizing a medium effect size of .05 at Power = .80, 128 participants' scores on the TCI were needed (Cohen, 1992). All 400 of the students in the sample will have filled out the TCI during the orientation process. Both samples were anonymous, and no identifying information was made available.

A factor analysis was completed on the TCI in which nine factors among the 116 items were identified. The nine factors include: 1) college involvement, 2) influences in college choice, 3) student role commitment, 4) health orientation, 5) personal/ academic concerns, 6) self-confidence, 7) institutional commitment, 8) social orientation, and 9) independent activity focus.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

A major limitation of this study involved the process by which the sample was selected. This study aimed to examine the differences in expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment between honors college students and non-honors students, and to examine the academic adjustment and success of participating in the Honors College. Participants were randomly selected from a sample of students in the Honors College and from a sample of students in the general population. The students' responses on the TCI were used to compare these two groups. This process presented as a limitation due to the fact that external variables were not to be accounted for.

Another limitation is that the TCI is not an instrument that is usually used to assess college student adjustment. This leads to generalizability being a limitation as well.

Delimitations of this study include the fact that the two groups of students were Old Dominion University students who have taken the TCI during orientation; therefore, this study has limited generalizability to other universities.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

It is assumed that the TCI will accurately assess students' expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment and that the students have responded to each question honestly with little influence of social desirability.

### **Definitions of Terms**

#### **Academic adjustment**

Academic adjustment is defined by Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986) as a student's ability to adapt to the educational demands characteristic of the college environment, their attitude towards the work being presented, as well as the effectiveness of their efforts towards the academic work. Academic adjustment is also characterized by a student's satisfaction with what the academic environment can offer in the way of classes and programs offered.

**Social adjustment**

Social adjustment is conceptualized by Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986) as a student's ability to adapt to the social demands in the college environment, such as participation in social activities, meeting new people, and coping with being away from home.

**Personal-emotional adjustment**

Personal-emotional adjustment is conceptualized by Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986) as a student's ability to cope with the psychological and physical stressors that are characteristic of the college environment.

**Institutional adjustment**

Institutional adjustment is defined by Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986) as a student's bond with his or her institution, as well as the student's commitment to the goals of the institution. It also includes the student's desire to persist at the higher education institution.

**Honors College**

The Official Guide of the National Collegiate Honors Council offers basic characteristics of a

fully developed honors program (Digby, 2002).

These characteristics include: 1) curriculum with special courses, seminars, and independent study, 2) requirements that include a majority of the student's undergraduate work, 3) faculty selected based on their teaching ability, 4) identifying students based on clearly articulated criteria, and 5) academic counseling specifically for honors students by qualified staff. For the purposes of this study the terms honors colleges and honors programming was used interchangeably. The terms honors college students and honors students were also used interchangeably.

### **Academic Success**

Academic success was assessed by examining students' transcripts, and students receiving a 3.0 or above were considered academically successful.

### **Retention**

Retention was defined as a student who persisted from the fall semester to the spring semester



### **Summary**

The current literature suggests that there are common stressors experienced by essentially all students as they make the transition to higher education institutions. The literature also suggests that the experiences of high-achieving college students may differ when compared to other students, but there has been limited research that has focused on the expected adjustment of gifted college students (Hoge & Renzulli, 1993; Marsh et al., 1995). There is also limited research that has focused on the academic outcomes of participating in an honors college. It has been documented that gifted students can experience perfectionism, multipotentiality, and other socioemotional factors, but how this might affect expected adjustment and academic outcomes has yet to be examined. These previous studies have provided insight into the experiences of gifted students in middle and high school, but there is a lack of research specific to gifted college students.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the current literature pertaining to college student adjustment and expectations, academic outcomes, and how they relate to high-achieving students. It emphasizes the need for more research on the gifted learner in the college context. These areas of adjustment carry particular importance to administrators in higher education because they are closely linked to retention. Successfully adjusted students performing well academically are less likely to leave the institution before obtaining a degree, and will have a more satisfying educational experience. Higher education institutions are increasing efforts to recruit and retain high-achieving or gifted students, and honors colleges are one part of this recruitment effort (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). While the areas of academic success and adjustment have been vigorously studied, there is a gap present in the literature as to how it might relate to high-achieving college students.

### **College Student Adjustment**

As students make the transition from high school to college they are presented with new and sometimes unexpected challenges. The numbers of students planning to attend college within two years of graduating from high school has consistently risen each year (Wirt et al., 2004). With more students considering attending institutions of higher education, it is important they are prepared for all of the rigors, especially academic, they will face. According to Smith and Wertlieb (2005), some students are not prepared to make the transition from high school to college. Some students may not

realize that what was expected of them in high school will differ in college. It is this lack of understanding of the different expectations in institutions of higher education that can lead students to struggle academically (Kern et al., 1998).

This transition from high school to an institution of higher education encompasses a multitude of challenges in emotional, academic, and social adjustment (Chickering, 1969). Some students are able to make this transition easily, and are able to adjust to their new environment and the pressures it brings, while others struggle. A higher proportion of students who struggle in their adjustment end up withdrawing from the institution (Baker & Siryk, 1986).

Baker and Siryk (1984) developed a conceptual model of adjustment in which the overarching definition of overall adjustment is conceptualized as consisting of four distinct components. The four components or aspects include academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. In an effort to offer a means of approach to conceptualize a student's adjustment to college, Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986) devised a reliable and valid instrument known as the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Baker and Siryk (1986) suggest that "the data from the scale made possible an easy and comfortable approach to, and productive discussion of, the topic of a student's adjustment to college" (p. 34). It is from this data that Baker and Siryk's conceptual model of adjustment was born. Researchers in Baker and Siryk's (1986) study interviewed students with the purpose of examining the congruence between items on the scale and what had been occurring in the student's adjustment to college. Students were able to give explanations as to why things had been going poorly or well. Low scores were accounted for in the social area when students talked about problems making or

keeping friends, or problems with significant others. Low scores were accounted for in the academic areas when students talked about difficulty in goal-setting, personal motivation for being in college, and level of difficulty of the work or lack of challenge by coursework. Low scores were accounted for in the personal-emotional areas when students talked about psychological or physical states as well as health problems. These adjustment relevant behaviors mark the transition into the aspects of adjustment in Baker and Siryk's conceptual model.

Baker and Siryk (1984) created this model as a way to conceptualize college student adjustment which includes the various components of adjustment as well as overall adjustment. The underlying assumption in the conceptual model emphasizes the fact that the institution itself is demanding and multifaceted. According to Baker and Siryk (1984), these demands require the student to utilize his or her coping responses. The academic adjustment component describes a student's ability to successfully cope with the educational demands that are characteristic of the college experience. Students are also presented with many social demands. The social adjustment component speaks to a student's ability to cope with the interpersonal-societal demands of college (Baker & Siryk, 1984). The personal/emotional component addresses how a student is coping psychologically and physically. Finally there is the institutional component that addresses how a student is feeling about being in college as well as the bond the student has developed with the institution.

### **Academic Adjustment**

Baker and Siryk (1984) define academic adjustment as having a positive attitude toward setting and completing academic goals and requirements, as well as how

effectively a student can meet these requirements. Recent surveys have indicated that college students are experiencing more stressors (Boulter, 2002). Students who perceive themselves as being able to adapt to the new intellectual demands were more academically adjusted (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993). In various studies, academic adjustment has been linked to retention, but it addresses more than a student's grade point average. A student's motivation to learn and satisfaction with his or her learning environment are important components as well (Baker & Siryk, 1984). A highly motivated student who has a realistic view of how he or she will handle the new academic stressors will have a better self-concept. Previous studies have indicated that students who had unrealistically high evaluations of their ability showed a negative relationship between their self-concept and grade point average (Boulter, 2002).

Lyn Boulter (2002) studied whether self-concept predicted academic adjustment. First-year students were given the Self-Perception for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986). This assessment is divided into two categories. The first category measures competencies and abilities, and the second measures social relationships. Boulter (2002) found that self-perception of intellectual ability had a positive influence on adjustment. This result confirmed previous research by Tinto (1993), which found that students with high levels of confidence in their intellectual ability and belief that they had the ability to reach their academic goals were able to successfully adjust to the academic demands. The results of these findings also are consistent with the results of a study conducted by Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994). In Gerdes and Mallinckrodt's (1994) study, students were given a pre-matriculation survey (Anticipated Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire) at the beginning of the school semester that

assessed a student's anticipated adjustment. Seven weeks into the semester a follow-up survey was sent (Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire) to students that assessed actual college adjustment. The results indicated that students tend to overestimate their ability to adjust academically, but underestimate their ability to adjust personally and emotionally (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Gerdes and Mallinckrodt also added to the literature in their findings that retention trends may be more nuanced than previously thought. They found that the persistence trends differed between academically successful students and those who are not successful. For students not struggling academically, informal contacts with professors and sense of self-confidence were important predictors of persistence. For students struggling academically, freedom from anxiety and satisfaction with extracurricular activities were important predictors of persistence.

A student's tendency to overestimate his or her ability to adjust academically has been labeled by Stern (1966) as the freshman myth. Baker et al. (1985) found that students that had a discrepancy between their anticipated and actual adjustment to the institution performed worse academically, and were more likely to withdraw from college. A study conducted by Jackson et al. (2000) contradicted these previous results. The findings indicated that expectations about adjustment were important predictors, but optimistic expectations did not predict less effective adjustment. This study did not support previous research that indicated that positive expectations about the institution of higher education leads to difficulties in adjustment when these expectancies are disconfirmed (Pancer et al., 2000). This study adds to the literature regarding expected adjustment in that the expected adjustment of honors students has been compared to that of non-honors students. This has the potential to inform counselors and higher education

administrators as to how honors students differ in this regard, and how this affects their academic success.

### **Social Adjustment**

Social adjustment is especially important for adolescents in the transition to an institution of higher education as they begin the process of individuation from their families and previous support systems (Friedlander et al., 2007). Friedlander et al. (2007) assessed social adjustment by how well students were functioning in their social environment, their involvement in social activities, and their satisfaction with social aspects of the university experience. The findings suggest that even though students experience their highest levels of stress at the beginning of the school year, social support is a protective factor that can assist students as they transition to the institution. Students who had the perception that their social resources had increased, had improved adjustment. It is these friendships that may also assist with a student's adjustment to college.

Buote et al. (2007) continued the investigation of social adjustment and extended it to focus on friendships. Friendships are one of the mechanisms that might counteract some of the stress that comes along with adjustment to college because they are sources of social support (Tokuno, 1986). Students who leave home to attend an institution of higher education must cope with both the stressors associated with attending college and the feelings about being separated from family and friends (Buote et al., 2007). Friendships at college can serve to ameliorate these stressors. According to Tokuno (1986) friends can take on many different roles. They can be role models, listeners, individuals who understand, and companions (Richey & Richey, 1980). Buote et al.

(2007) examined the relationship between university adjustment and new friendships developed at the higher education institution and found that, not only were new friendships related to social adjustment, they also showed a significant relationship with students' feelings of attachment to the institution and their academic adjustment. Students indicated that forming new friendships often led to meeting more people and engaging in more social activities. They also helped the students to manage the stress they faced in the college environment.

Social adjustment has also been linked to students' place of residence. Based on previous research indicating that friendships and social connections ease the stressors of adjustment, Al-Qaisy (2010) conducted a study examining the impact of a student's place of residence on adjustment. As many students leave home to attend college, they will become less connected to friends from high school. They will have to replenish their social networks on campus. It can be expected that students who are more socially connected to others, and have social support will be less lonely (Duru, 2008). Residence halls would naturally be places where students would be able to interact with each other, and where more social activities would take place (Al-Qaisy, 2010). As students interact with others and engage in activities they are able to connect to the campus environment. According to Al-Qaisy (2010), first year students who have yet to form friendships in their new environments can benefit from the social relationships created in residence halls. Students who live in residence halls make more friends than do commuter students (Hays & Oxley, 1986). Forming new friendships and making new connections is linked to more than aspects of social adjustment. Students engaging in this behavior will be less likely to experience loneliness, depression, and social isolation which can be linked to



personal-emotional adjustment. This study has the potential to inform university officials as to how honors students may differ from other students with respect to expected social adjustment. This would ultimately allow for more specificity in programming, advising, and counseling of high-achieving students.

### **Personal-Emotional Adjustment**

Personal-emotional adjustment, as defined by Baker and Siryk (1984), refers to a student's physical and psychological health. While social adjustment has been described as being equally important as academic factors in predicting persistence, students who leave universities during their first semesters often name emotional reasons as being the cause of their departure (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Pritchard et al., 2007). For some students the transition to the higher education institution may be more stressful than previously expected. These expectations versus the realities of adjusting to college will be addressed later, but personal-emotional adjustment is connected to the other aspects of adjustment. A student's personal-emotional adjustment can have an effect on his or her academic, social, and institutional adjustment. Students who are not healthy psychologically or physically will have difficulty excelling academically, engaging socially, and bonding with their particular institutions. According to the American College Health Association (2006), undergraduate students reported stress as being a major factor that impacted their academic performance.

According to Pritchard et al. (2007), the experience of attending college may cause physical and psychological distress in students. For some students the stressors involved with navigating a new environment, more freedoms, and a new social environment proves to be overwhelming. Students who experience the college

environment in this way are more likely to experience deficits in their personal-emotional adjustment. These deficits may present as global psychological distress, depression, low self-esteem, or anxiety (Pritchard et al., 2007). Depression has been described as one of the major psychiatric disorders of college students (Sherer, 1985; Vredenburg, O'Brien, & Kramer, 1988) and has been linked to maladaptive perfectionism (Rice & Mirzadeh, 2000). All of these disorders can be linked to low personal-emotional adjustment.

Pritchard et al. (2007) conducted a study in which undergraduates were given multiple assessments to measure alcohol use, stress, perfectionism, and coping tactics to investigate whether college students experience a decrease in their physical and psychological health within a year following matriculation. The authors found that college students did in fact experience a decrease in their physical and psychological health during this time, with students scoring higher in perfectionism more likely to report physical health problems. This finding directly links to the current study due to the fact that according to LoCicero and Ashby (2000), college students in honors programs are more likely to be maladaptive perfectionists. Maladaptive perfectionism has been linked to depression, social isolation, and academic difficulty (Cross, Gust-Brey, & Ball, 2002). At the end of the students' first year of study, the quantity of alcohol consumed on weekends, physical ailments, frequency of drinking, and negative affect were all more prevalent than they were at the beginning of the year.

### **Institutional Adjustment**

Institutional adjustment or attachment is defined by Baker and Siryk (1984) as a student's sense of loyalty to a specific institution, and how well a student has bonded with his or her institution. Institutional attachment as a construct has been largely

ignored in the literature (Cohorn & Giuliano, 1999). Institutional attachment, however, was addressed in a study conducted by Cohorn and Giuliano (1999). The purpose of this study was to further examine the relationship of institutional variables to attachment. As it was stated earlier, certain aspects of adjustment can be linked to each other. Seeming to be in contradiction to this, it was hypothesized in this study that institutional attachment would be related to general adjustment, but would still be a very different construct. Participants were first-year college students, and were given a questionnaire which focused on aspects of adjustment to college life. The findings of this study were in support of the initial hypothesis. Specifically, academic and personal-emotional adjustment predicted general adjustment, but institutional attachment did not. Social adjustment was the only construct that predicted institutional attachment (Cohorn & Giuliano, 1999). This is however consistent with Berger and Milem's (1999) finding that students who are more involved were also more socially integrated (developed close bonds with peers and faculty). Social integration is associated with commitment to the institution.

Building on the concept that social integration is associated with commitment to the higher education institution and therefore tied to institutional attachment, Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, and Woods (2009), conducted a study in which they examined whether sense of belonging mediated the relationship between social and academic integration. The results of the study indicated that a student's sense of belonging has a direct positive effect on his or her institutional commitment, and mediated the relationship involving psychological adjustment (Hausmann et al., 2009). Previous research found social integration to have a direct effect on institutional commitment, but it was found in this

study to only have an indirect effect on institutional commitment through its impact on sense of belonging (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993). As stated previously, sense of belonging is closely tied to psychological adjustment. This seems to support the concept that the different constructs of adjustment are related to each other, and could explain why much of the literature addresses overall adjustment as opposed to each construct.

### **Expectation Fulfillment Versus Expectation Disillusionment**

Support and confirmation can be found in the literature for the idea that expectations about the higher education institution are closely connected to adjustment. The perceptions and expectations of college bound students are often times romanticized versions of the reality (Keup, 2007). As mentioned previously, this phenomenon has been referred to as the freshman myth, and also includes a student's tendency to overestimate his or her ability to adjust academically (Stern, 1966). Baker et al. (1985) confirmed this idea when they found that students who experienced a discrepancy between their expectations and the realities of the institution performed worse academically, and were more likely to withdraw from school.

### **Using Expectations as a Proxy for Measured Adjustment**

According to Jackson et al. (2000), expectations are important predictors of student's adjustment to college. This means, according to Jackson et al. (2000), that expected adjustment has a potentially significant impact on a student's actual adjustment. One major theory about the differences between precollege expectations and the actual first-year experience is expectancy-value theory. Expectancy-value theory implies that motivation to perform is dependent on whether the student feels he or she can be successful (Geiger & Cooper, 1995). In other words, if a student has the perception that

he or she will not be successful in the higher education institution, that student will have little need to study. Further, a student who has the expectation that he or she will excel academically will develop the necessary study skills needed to do so (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). This also makes the case for the importance of examining the impact of expected adjustment.

Along these lines, Smith and Wertlieb (2005) set out to explore the problems that can arise for students when there are discrepancies between high school expectations and university experiences. As the researchers mentioned, positive academic expectations do not necessarily guarantee success, and academic success comes from the ability to adapt to the new environment and to make changes in study habits when necessary. Smith and Wertlieb (2005) examined three research questions, including: (1) To what extent do first-year students' academic expectations of college align with their early and end of the first-year experiences? (2) To what extent do first-year students' social expectations of college align with their early and of the first-year experiences? (3) What is the relationship between expectations/experiences and academic achievement? The researchers collected data using a survey that assessed academic and social expectations. The survey instrument consisted of nine items that addressed academic expectations, and 15 items that addressed social expectations. Examples included: The pacing of course content will be faster in college; and I will need to attend all classes in college. Students, using the Likert scale, were asked to rate their academic and social expectations at three points during the academic year. The sample consisted of 31 students who completed all three administrations of the survey. Paired t-tests revealed that students with high academic or social expectations had lower first-year GPAs than students with average or

below average expectations. High expectations were assessed based on a survey that was given to students at three different points in the semester. The first administration measured expectations, the second measured early experiences, and the third measured first year experiences. The researchers examined the mean differences between each of the surveys. Students that scored one deviation above the mean on the first survey were considered to have high expectations (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). This finding is consistent with the expectancy-value theory, but it shed new light on the theory in that the student's expectations must be realistic, and must match the student's actual experiences in college.

### **High-Achieving Students and Adjustment**

Although all students must adjust to the educational and social demands of being in college, high-achieving students face unique challenges that may add to these demands (Reis & Renzulli, 2004). Popular media and television shows tend to portray the stereotypically socially awkward student, but this may not be the case (Reis & Renzulli, 2004). While this common stereotype may be inaccurate, gifted and talented students face added stressors that affect their social and emotional development which ultimately affects adjustment (Reis & Renzulli, 2004). These stressors may present in students as perfectionism, anxiety and isolation, and multipotentiality (Hibbard & Davies, 2011; Rinn & Plucker, 2004; Vialle et al., 2007). The literature is saturated with studies on gifted children and adolescents, but there has been little research on academically talented students who would be classified as traditional college students, and how ability grouping may affect their adjustment (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). Even though the stereotype mentioned above is prevalent, high achieving students are at least as effectively adjusted as other students (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002). These

students do not experience any more social and emotional problems than other students, but previous research indicated high-achievers' experiences may be different (Hoge & Renzulli, 1993; Marsh et al., 1995). This study could further define the gifted population by examining the differences that exist, if any, between them and other students. If honors students differ in certain aspects of their expected adjustment, this has the potential to inform university administrators as to programming that would be effective for this population.

### **High Achieving Students and Academic Adjustment**

Grouping students based on ability has long been a practice in middle and high schools. In gifted education, the prevailing body of thought is that gifted and talented classes and schools are needed for this population of students (Marsh & Craven, 2000). It is thought that grouping these students together will produce academic as well as psychological benefits (Rinn, 2007). The academic and psychological development of gifted college students is not well understood, but the influence of college on these aspects has been extensively studied (Rinn, 2007). Zeidner and Schleyer (1998), found that students in mixed ability classes had higher academic self-concepts, lower anxiety levels, and higher grades than students in high ability classes.

In a study conducted by Rinn (2007), an assessment was given to students to measure academic self-concept, academic achievement, and aspirations. Participants included gifted college students enrolled in an honors program and gifted students not enrolled in an honors program. The findings indicated that the gifted students enrolled in the honors program had higher academic self-concepts than the gifted students not enrolled in the honors program.

As universities make efforts to recruit more high-achieving students, selectivity of the college is an important factor. Selectivity refers to the academic ability of an institution's first year students (Astin & Henson, 1971). Honors programs, or programs for gifted college students, are usually more selective than their host institution because the members have higher academic abilities (Rinn, 2007). With little in the literature about the effects of ability grouping in a college setting, different hypotheses have been offered in the literature.

Two potentially useful models are the theory of relative deprivation and the big-fish-little-pond effect. According to the theory of relative deprivation a highly selective environment will result in students demonstrating lower academic achievement (Davis, 1966). Davis (1966), using a sample of 35,000 students, found there was a difference in the grade point averages depending on the selectivity of the higher education institution. Even though the students had equal ability, students who attended the more selective universities had lower grade point averages (Davis, 1966). It is from this study that Davis came to the conclusion that it would be better for a gifted student to attend a less selective higher education institution.

This theory has been met with mixed results when tested. A study conducted by Alexander and Eckland (1977) supported the theory of relative deprivation when it was found that students' academic performance was affected negatively depending on the selectivity of the university. At the more selective universities students performed worse academically. However, the study conducted by Rinn (2007) mentioned earlier, did not support this theory as the gifted students in the honors program had higher grade point averages. The results from the present study have the potential to shed light on the



contradictory nature of these studies. The first semester academic success of honors students as compared to non-honors students will have an impact on the effects of ability grouping at Old Dominion University.

While the effects of ability groupings have produced contradictory findings, the criteria necessary to be placed into high ability grouping can differ. The terms gifted and high-achiever can be conceptualized differently depending on the setting. According to Ross (1993), the term giftedness has no specific definition as it depends heavily on the particular circumstance. What might be defined as gifted or high-achieving at one higher education institution may be completely different from the definition in another setting (Ross, 1993). While it has been acknowledged in the literature that there are various definitions of these terms, Renzulli (1978) offered a conceptual framework of giftedness. He believed that people who are gifted are capable of developing a set of traits and then applying them to valuable areas of human performance. This broad definition seems consistent with the theory of multipotentiality. Multipotentiality has been defined by Rinn and Plucker (2004) as the possibility of making a significant contribution in two or more areas. This is an academic adjustment issue that may especially factor in for high achievers, as many of them excel in more than one domain. These students have been made aware at an early age that because of their giftedness, their academic and career options are endless. Most of the gifted population is considered to be multipotentialed (Milgram & Hong, 1999). This can present problems when these students reach an institution of higher education and it is time to select a major and career path. It is this idea of endless possibilities that has the potential to lead to indecision and lack of commitment on the part of the student (Rysiew, Shore, & Leeb, 1999). Lack of

commitment and indecision regarding academics will inevitably have an effect on a student's academic adjustment and success.

The concept of multipotentiality is often associated with gifted learners, but some findings with the model have been mixed. In a study conducted by Milgram and Hong (1999) this widely accepted belief that gifted adolescents are multipotential in their abilities was studied. Three intellectual ability and vocational interest ability assessments were given to participants selected from the Israel Defense Force, but only data for males was made available to the researchers. Milgram and Hong (1999) found the majority of gifted students indicated on the assessments that they had a differentiated pattern of abilities as opposed to multipotentiality. In other words, a larger number of gifted students indicated strengths in specific abilities, as opposed to being skilled in many different areas. A small number of the gifted students reported being multipotential. Their findings suggest that multipotentiality among gifted students should be considered again.

A study by Achter, Lubinski, and Benbow (1996) confirmed these findings. In fact, Achter, Lubinski, and Benbow (1996) stated that current empirical studies offer little support for the pervasiveness of multipotentiality. Previous research indicated that the assessment of abilities and interests of gifted people produced the presence of high-flat abilities and interests. Achter et al. (1996) reasoned that to accurately assess the abilities and interests of the gifted, above-level instruments should be used. It is because above-level instruments have not been used that flat profiles have been frequent among the gifted population (Stanley, 1990). Achter et al. (1996) conducted a study in which they examined whether measurements of abilities (using the SAT) and preferences (using the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values and the Strong- Campbell Interest Inventory)

would produce differentiated ability-preference profiles. Once these assessments were given, it was found that fewer than 20% of the students presented with flat ability interest or ability profiles. This indicates that when gifted adolescents are assessed properly, their interests and abilities are differentiated (Achter et al., 1996).

While the idea of multipotentiality has been challenged by some researchers, other investigators support its utility. For example, according to Berger (1989), multipotential people excel in many areas, and are highly motivated. For students pursuing higher education, these qualities have the potential to be extremely helpful, but there can be aspects to multipotentiality that impede a gifted student's success in college. Specifically, high abilities in many different areas would at first seem to be exciting, but it may also lead to anxiety when confronted with too many choices (Rysiew et al., 1999; Pask-McCartney & Salomone, 1988). Decision making can become difficult especially regarding career options for the student. Multipotential individuals may be indecisive about selecting a career, which can lead to students falling behind their peers in career progress (Kerr, 1991). The difficulty of making a career decision can lead to these students placing a large responsibility on this one decision (Rysiew et al., 1999). It is this difficulty in making a decision that can lead to another factor that sometimes affects gifted students. Many multipotentialed gifted students also deal with perfectionism (Rysiew et al., 1999), which can ultimately have an effect not only on academic adjustment but on personal-emotional adjustment as well (Rysiew et al., 1999). The current study sought to examine the differences in the expected adjustment of honors students versus non-honors students. Previous research has indicated that high-achieving students deal with specific issues that may affect their adjustment, and this study sought

to add to the literature as to whether there is in fact a difference between these two groups of students.

### **High Achieving Students and Personal-Emotional Adjustment**

There is a certain amount of pressure that is inevitable as students' progress through institutions of higher education. This pressure can be felt by all students, but honors students may feel it more acutely. Perfectionism is defined by Blatt (1995) as having extremely high and unrealistic standards while being highly self-critical. Having high standards can lead to academic success, but relentless self-criticism is harmful to the student. Perfectionism has been defined in a multidimensional framework that emphasizes both adaptive and maladaptive aspects (Rice et al., 2006). Maladaptive perfectionism would include excessive worries about making mistakes and self-doubt. Adaptive perfectionism would include having high personal standards without the excessive self-doubt (Rice et al., 2006). Previous research indicated what has been described as normal perfectionists. This group has high personal standards, but are more forgiving in their self-evaluations. Neurotic perfectionists are those who avoid positive evaluations of themselves unless they are perfect (Hamachek, 1978). This category of perfectionism has been linked to depression, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and eating disorders (Blatt, 1995; Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Researchers found that college students in honors programs are more likely to be maladaptive perfectionists (LoCicero & Ashby, 2000). According to Rice et al. (2006), high-achieving students are at risk for adjustment difficulties due to maladaptive perfectionism. Maladaptive perfectionism has been linked to not only depression and hopelessness, but to social isolation and academic difficulty as well (Cross, Gust-Brey, & Ball, 2002).

A study was conducted by Rice et al. (2006) which examined whether social connection served as a moderator of perfectionism. At two different times in the semester honors students living in designated on-campus honors housing at a public university were given assessments. These assessments measured perfectionism dimensions, self-appraised stress, the degree of belonging to a social group, depressive symptoms, hopelessness, and academic integration. The results of this study were consistent with previous findings. Social connection served as a moderator in lessening the effects of maladaptive perfectionism. The literature suggests that not only are highly gifted students more likely to be isolated socially, maladaptively perfectionistic honors students have less social support available to them ( Gross, 2004; Rice et al., 2006).

### **High Achieving Students and Social Adjustment**

Social support has been closely tied to many benefits for college students. Social support has been linked to better adjustment to college and to a decrease in loneliness (Lamothe et al., 1995). There are inconsistent findings regarding gifted students and social isolation, but loneliness is another issue that may be felt more intensely by gifted students (Baker, 1995).

Being able to form bonds with other students experiencing the same stressors can serve as an outlet to students and demonstrates to them they are not experiencing these stressors alone. As students make the transition from high school to college, their previously established social ties are disrupted (Mattanah, Ayers, Brand, & Brooks, 2010). It is during this transition to college that students must rebuild their support system. A best friend may be one of the most important factors in any major life transition (Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). Many students will be presented with these

difficulties, but researchers have indicated that loneliness may be more prevalent among gifted students.

For example, Vialle et al. (2007) analyzed data pertaining to the outcomes of 65 gifted students to determine any differences between gifted and nongifted students. In this study, which has been called the Wollongong Youth Study, gifted students were selected from over 950 students from five high schools. Only students that scored in the top 10% of certain standardized tests were selected. These tests measured students' aptitude in literacy and math (Vialle et al., 2007). The students selected were then given personality assessments including a self-esteem measure, a social support measure, a teacher rating measure, and a measure of affective outcomes. The social support measure asked students how satisfied they were with the support they had received, and to whom they would turn to for this support. Gifted students, although they received more social support, were less satisfied with the support they received than non-gifted students (Vialle et al., 2007). The results of the teacher rating scale indicated teachers believed gifted students to be better adjusted, and less likely to experience emotional problems. On the affective outcomes measure, gifted students reported higher means on the negative affect measures such as sadness. The finding of this study suggests gifted students feel sadder and more alone, but their teachers are unaware of their feelings (Vialle et al., 2007). This finding is consistent with previous results suggesting loneliness may be a more salient factor in gifted students' adjustment than in the adjustment of non-gifted students. The current study will further illuminate the differences in gifted students' adjustment by examining the differences that exist in the expected adjustment of honors students and non-honors students.

### **High Achieving Students and Institutional Adjustment**

Institutional adjustment has been described by Baker and Siryk (1986) as a student's bond with his or her institution, as well as a student's desire to persist at the institution. Social integration is closely related to institutional adjustment. Students who are more integrated socially (have close bonds with peers and faculty) feel a closer bond with their university (Berger and Milem, 1999). Hebert and McBee (2007) conducted a qualitative study in which they examined the experiences of gifted college students to understand how ability grouping in an honors college influenced their intellectual, social, and emotional development. The researchers found that one consistent theme among the students interviewed was that of their honors program serving as a safe place, as many had experienced isolation in high school. The findings also indicated these feelings of isolation subsided when they became a part of the honors program at their institution, and connected with similar students. This social integration ultimately has an effect on institutional adjustment.

**Big-fish-little-pond-effect.** The BFLPE (big-fish-little-pond-effect) usually occurs when there is a change in a student's reference group, and directly addresses a student's self-concept (Rinn, 2007). Self-concept can be directly linked to institutional attachment in that any deficiencies will have an impact on the student's desire to persist, and bond, with the higher education institution. When gifted students are moved from mixed ability grouping to high ability grouping, such as honors classes, this may serve as a challenge to their perceived competence level (Rinn, 2007). Students of similar ability will have a lower self-concept in classes in which the achievement level of classmates is high, and will have higher self-concept in classes in which the achievement level of

classmates is low (Marsh, 1987). Students compare their abilities to other students in their classes. When this frame of reference changes with high ability grouping students may feel less competent in their own abilities which can ultimately have an effect on a student's desire to persist at an institution of higher education. Marsh's (1991) findings were consistent with this idea when it was found that students attending high ability schools were more likely to select less demanding coursework and have lower grade point averages than students attending lower ability schools. These findings would suggest that ability grouping is not beneficial to gifted students.

Studies meant to test BFLPE have produced mixed results. A study conducted by Zeidner and Schleyer (1998), compared gifted students in ability grouped classes to gifted students in mixed ability classes. The findings seemed to support the BFLPE as they found that students in the mixed ability classes had higher academic self-concepts, lower anxiety levels, and higher grades (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1998). There was also a study conducted by Suk Wai Wong and Watkins (2001) that provided evidence of support for BFLPE. They found that students who were in mixed ability classes had higher self-esteem than students in higher ability grouping classes.

There have been studies as well that do not support BFLPE. In a study conducted by Rinn (2007), an assessment was given to students to measure academic self-concept, academic achievement, and aspirations. Participants included gifted college students enrolled in an honors program and gifted students not enrolled in an honors program. The findings contradicted the BFLPE in that the gifted students enrolled in the honors program had higher academic self-concepts than the gifted students not enrolled in the honors program. This finding seems to be in support of honors programming for gifted



students. It has been suggested that by being in such a selective group, gifted students are made more aware of their abilities (Rinn, 2007). The current study adds to the literature in that students that participated in honors programming did in fact have higher GPA's than students who did not participate in honors programming.

### **Honors College: Intervention to Promote High-Achieving Students' Adjustment**

Many honors programs are housed in colleges and universities in the form of honors colleges. The organizational pattern of honors colleges differs according to institution, but most offer general education courses with some version of a colloquia or honors thesis (Sederberg, 2005). Many honors colleges offer students smaller class sizes with instruction that emphasizes innovation and more contact with faculty (Fisher, 1996). This contact with faculty can include opportunities to assist with research and to be mentored by faculty members in the student's major. At some universities there is specialized housing for honors students, in which the programming available is specific to the needs of this population. Some honors colleges offer extra incentives to recruit students by offering them financial aid in the form of scholarships (Daniel & Digby, 2002). Despite these differences, there are certain common characteristics that honors colleges should possess. The Official Guide of the National Collegiate Honors Council offers basic characteristics of a fully developed honors program (Digby, 2002). These characteristics include: 1) curriculum with special courses, seminars, and independent study, 2) requirements that include a majority of the student's undergraduate work, 3) faculty selected based on their teaching ability, 4) identifying students based on clearly articulated criteria, and 5) academic counseling specifically for honors students by qualified staff.

As a learning strategy, honors colleges have their supporters as well as critics. Supporters believe that honors students' accomplishments bring prestige to the university, and ultimately serve to increase the academic rigor of the university (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). In some cases the achievements of high achieving students are viewed as an accomplishment and a direct result of the effectiveness of the institution (Seifert, Pascarella, Colangelo, & Assouline, 2007). Detractors, however, point out that the idea of honors programs go against the American ideal of egalitarianism in education. VanPoolen-Larsen (1991) levied the criticism that honors programs take much needed resources from programs designed to assist the neediest students. Another criticism is that as a result of having honors programs, the most effective faculty and best students are taken out of the general classroom where their contributions would positively affect all students (Seifert et al., 2007).

Even in the face of these criticisms, there has been renewed emphasis on recruiting gifted college students. In spite of this renewed interest in programming for gifted college students, there is very limited research on the outcomes for students participating in honors colleges. More research is needed about the effects of collegiate honors programs (Hebert & McBee, 2007).

### **Adjustment Outcomes of Honors Colleges**

Although the studies have been limited as to the outcomes of honors colleges, Astin (1993) conducted what is usually described as the most systematic research on honors programs. Astin's research included controlled correlational longitudinal investigations of 25,000 students at 217 colleges. Astin found that the students in the honors programs exhibited substantial gains in intellectual and interpersonal self-esteem,

as well as artistic interests. Another finding of this study indicated that students participating in honors programs were less likely to drop out, and were more likely to have the desire to attend graduate school (Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985). Astin's seminal study, although being one of the first to examine the effects of honors college participation, was limited in its design. Astin's study did not have a control group to use for comparison (Pflaum et al., 1985).

Beyond Astin's work, a study conducted by Pflaum et al. (1985) investigated the effects of being in an honors program on students' academic achievement. This study added to the literature by its inclusion of two comparison groups in the design, and the examination of academic achievement. The first comparison group consisted of students similar to honors students in academic achievement and aptitude, and the second comparison group consisted of a first year students selected randomly. The basis of the study was based on the work of Moos (1976) and Rossi (1966) who discovered that people who are a part of a particular group have a tendency to minimize the differences between them and the group. If students belong to an honors program that places a high value on academic achievement, they will also value this behavior. The honors program in the study encouraged peer interaction by providing students with opportunities to meet and work together. The results of this study indicated that honors program participation had a positive influence on students' academic achievement (Pflaum et al., 1985). This study supports the idea that honors programming benefits students academically.

Likewise, a study conducted by Ory and Braskamp (1988) produced similar results. The authors examined an honors program, the regular curriculum, and a program designed to assist academically disadvantaged students in their transition to an institution

of higher education. The prevailing idea in this study was the more the programs facilitated student involvement, the greater the self-reported intellectual development and satisfaction. The findings indicated that honors students reported intellectual and social gains. This also supports the idea that honors colleges benefit students, but the design of the study did not account for the precollege characteristics of the students (Seifert et al., 2007).

Similarly, precollege characteristics were taken into account in a study conducted by Seifert et al. (2007). In this study the impact of honors programs was assessed using a longitudinal pretest-posttest design. The sample used consisted of 18 four-year colleges and universities. Data was collected from incoming first-year students during the fall of 1992 that included a survey assessing precollege characteristics and educational goals. Another assessment was also given to students that assessed their reading comprehension, knowledge of math, and ability to think critically. In the spring of 1993, each participant completed the same assessment measuring the same three areas. The results of this study indicated honors programs improved students' cognitive growth during their first year of college (Seifert et al., 2007).

Hebert and McBee (2007) provided another qualitative study that examined the experiences of gifted college students to understand how their participation in a college honors program influenced their intellectual, social, and emotional development. There were three phases of data collection which involved observing honors students participating in honors activities, interviewing honors students at a reunion for honors program alumni, and collecting their reflective journal entries. The data collected was examined to pull out common themes. The researchers found that a consistent theme

among the students interviewed was that of their honors program serving as a safe place, as many had experienced isolation in high school. Herbert and McBee (2007) found these feelings of isolation existed for them in K-12 schooling because the students' intellectual needs were not being met. The findings also indicated these feelings of isolation subsided when they became a part of the honors program at their university and connected with similar students. Another finding presented in the study indicated that these students gained a sense of self worth from being involved in an organization known for its accomplishments (Hebert & McBee, 2007). This study indicates that honors colleges may provide students with much more than just academic enhancement.

### **Institutional Context of the Current Study**

Most contemporary adjustment studies utilize the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) which assess a student's overall adjustment as well as academic, social, institutional, and personal-emotional adjustment (Krotseng, 1992). While the SACQ addresses adjustment directly, according to McGrath and Braunstein (1997), the issues surrounding student adjustment differ depending on the institution. McGrath and Braunstein (1997) go on to state that institutions should conduct "in house research" to best identify the institution's predictors for adjustment (p.239). Correspondingly, the TCI is the instrument used at ODU and is required of all first year students. Therefore, the current study will be "in-house research" using a unique assessment instrument that is utilized at this specific institution.

### **Honors College Intervention for High-Achieving Students at ODU**

The Honors College at Old Dominion University is described as a way for students to experience a small liberal arts college within a large research intensive

institution. There are currently over 650 students in the Honors College with approximately 150 first year students. Students must apply using an online application, and are selected for participation based on certain criteria. The criteria used for the selection process includes SAT or ACT scores, high school grade point average, class rank, and a writing sample (*Honors Opportunities Brochure*, n.d.). The criteria used for current and transfer students differs in that their admission is based on a 3.8 GPA and they must be able to complete at least 48 additional credit hours at Old Dominion University or ODU. Students also have the option of submitting letters of reference with their application. Upon acceptance, students must sign a form listing the requirements for continuance in the Honors College. These requirements include taking four lower division honors courses, two honors designation courses, a service learning project, and a capstone course. Students are also required to attend one lecture per semester which includes speakers that come to campus, and programs created by staff.

Students receive certain benefits by being in the Honors College. These benefits include: 1) a \$500 stipend each year, 2) the ability to register for classes early, 3) honors housing, 4) faculty privileges at the library. Honors students can also apply for travel grants to assist with costs as they travel to present at conferences, and can apply for up to \$300 to assist with the costs of supplies that might be needed for research. Being a graduate of the Honors College is indicated on a student's transcript, and each student is promised a letter of recommendation from the Dean of the Honors College.

### **Measuring Adjustment Expectations at ODU Using the TCI**

The TCI was developed for use at Old Dominion University by J. Worth Pickering, James Calliotte, C. Anthony Macera, and Stephen Zerwas. After being tested

for more than 10 years, the instrument went through a revision in 2003 (Pickering, Calliotte, Macera, & Zerwas, n.d.). The TCI is a noncognitive measure meant to assist administrators and advisors in determining which students will face academic difficulty (Pickering et al., n.d.). The TCI is a self-report survey in which students respond to statements that are categorized in sections including: 1) reasons for attending college, 2) reasons for choosing this college, 3) experiences during the senior year of high school, 4) self ratings of abilities and traits, 5) attitudes about being a college student, 6) predictions about academic success in college, 7) predictions about involvement in college. The items were developed based on research done by Vincent Tinto, Alexander Astin, and William Sedlacek (Pickering et al., n.d.). The TCI was developed not only to identify students at-risk for academic difficulty, but students at-risk for attrition as well. Pickering et al.(n.d.), also designed the TCI based on research that examined noncognitive factors and the affective domain.

According to Pickering, Calliotte, and McAuliffe (1992), even though cognitive factors such as Scholastic Aptitude Test scores have been most frequently used by universities for admission purposes, noncognitive factors may be better predictors of success especially as universities become more diverse. For instance, Pickering et al. (1992) found that noncognitive predictors used alone were better at predicting academic success than either cognitive or demographic variables. Difficulties in adjustment, just like difficulties in academics mentioned above, can be directly tied in with an individual's personality and past educational and social experiences (Tinto, 1975; Pantages & Creedon, 1987). Due to the fact that the TCI measures attitudes and abilities,

it is expected to be a potentially effective assessment tool for measuring expected adjustment.

### **Current Study**

Previous researchers have found that students tend to overestimate their ability to adjust not only in the academic domains, but in non-academic domains as well (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). Earlier research has focused heavily on gifted children and adolescents, but there has been little research on academically talented students who would be classified as traditional college students (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). While the research on high-achieving college students is relatively limited, there is conflicting evidence as to whether gifted students thrive in ability grouping environments or perform worse academically. There is also conflicting evidence as to what role expected adjustment plays, if any, in a student's actual academic adjustment and success. Baker et al. (1985) found that students that had a discrepancy between their anticipated and actual adjustment to university performed worse academically, but a study conducted by Jackson et al. (2000) contradicted these previous results. Their findings indicated that expectations about adjustment were important predictors, but optimistic expectations did not predict less effective adjustment. This study did not support previous research that indicated that positive expectations about the higher education institution leads to difficulties in adjustment when these expectancies are disconfirmed (Pancer et al., 2000).

These studies, while informative, have left lingering questions in the literature that pertain to expected adjustment and its effect on a student's actual adjustment and success. This combined with the fact that gifted college students have received little



attention in the literature stresses the need to examine how and if this group differs from other students in regards to expected adjustment.

Three research questions were assessed in this study to answer the overarching concern regarding *How do honors students compare with non-honors students in expected adjustment and does expected adjustment and participation in the Honors College predict academic success and retention?* These research questions are:

**RQ1:** To what extent are there statistically significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment?

**RQ2:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?

**RQ3:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypothesis was assumed for each of the research questions.

Ho 1: There are no significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' reports on expected adjustment.

Ho 2: The level of expected adjustment will not predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students.

Ho 3: The level of expected adjustment will not predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHOD**

This chapter will explain the method, research design, present the research questions, and describe the selection process by which questions were identified on the TCI that relate to the different areas of adjustment. The chapter will also include the following sections: rationale, introducing and adapting the TCI for the current study, procedures for data collection and data analysis.

#### **Rationale**

According to Rinn and Plucker (2004), the achievements of honors students bring prestige to a university. Universities are increasing efforts to recruit gifted college students (Hebert & McBee, 2007). This emphasis on recruitment illuminated the need for research on the effects of honors programs on gifted college students (Herbert & McBee, 2007). There is a lack of research pertaining to gifted college students (Rinn & Plucker, 2004; Robinson, 1997). College student adjustment is an area of concern to college administrators due to the fact that students struggling with adjustment issues are more likely to withdraw from the institution (Baker & Siryk, 1986). A student's expectations can ultimately predict adjustment (Jackson et al., 2000). Previous research has indicated that the expectations of many students entering institutions of higher education tend to be more romanticized than the reality of college life (Keup, 2007). Early research focused on the idea of the freshman myth, which describes difficulty in adjustment as stemming from the discrepancy between a student's expectations before he or she begins an institution of higher education, and the realities of the actual experience (Stern, 1966). The term myth was used describe the idealism that encompasses students' expectations about higher education institutions. Stern (1966) expressed the idea that these idealized expectations would never be able to live up to the reality, as the first weeks attending the

institution were more challenging than students anticipated. According to Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994), students have a tendency to overestimate their abilities to adjust academically. The students who overestimate their ability to adjust to an institution will be more likely to drop out (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Due to the fact that the largest drop from expectation to perception occurs during the first year of enrollment, it is crucial to focus on that point in time (Baker, McNeil, & Siryk, 1985).

Honors college, or high-achieving, students face the same adjustment issues as other students, but they may face unique challenges that may add to these demands. These challenges can be a result of socioemotional factors, and/ or the result of ability grouping. These challenges can present as multipotentiality in which a student has the ability to excel in many different academic arenas, and perfectionism in which students have extremely high and unrealistic standards while being highly self-critical (Rinn & Plucker, 2004; Blatt, 1995). There is little in the current literature as to how these factors, in describing this population, may have an effect on expected adjustment and academic outcomes. There are contradictory studies concerning the academic outcomes in participating in an honors college. Marsh (1991) found that students attending high ability schools were more likely to select less demanding coursework, and have lower grade point averages than students attending lower ability schools. This finding would suggest that ability grouping is not beneficial to the academic adjustment and success of gifted students. Seeming to confirm this finding, Zeidner and Schleyer (1998), found that students in mixed ability classes had higher academic self-concepts, lower anxiety levels, and higher grades than students in high ability classes.

In a study conducted by Rinn (2007), an assessment was given to students to measure academic self-concept, academic achievement, and aspirations. Participants included gifted college students enrolled in an honors program and gifted students not enrolled in an honors program. The findings directly contradict the previous studies presented above in that the gifted students enrolled in the honors program had higher academic self-concepts than the gifted students not enrolled in the honors program. This finding would suggest that ability grouping is in fact beneficial to the academic adjustment and success of gifted college students.

Accordingly, more research is needed about the effects of collegiate honors programs (Hebert & McBee, 2007). Therefore, in the current study the academic outcomes and expected adjustment of honors college students were further examined.

Three research questions were addressed in this study. To answer the overarching concern regarding *How do honors students compare with non-honors students in expected adjustment and does expected adjustment and participation in the Honors College predict academic adjustment?* These three research questions are:

**RQ1:** To what extent are there statistically significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment?

**RQ2:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?

**RQ3:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students?

## Hypotheses

The research questions examined in this study were tested using the null hypotheses. The null hypothesis was assumed for each of the research questions.

Ho 1: There are no significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' reports on expected adjustment.

Ho 2: The level of expected adjustment will not predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students.

Ho 3: The level of expected adjustment will not predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students.

Table 1 will further explain research questions, independent and dependent variables, and data analysis.

**Table 1:** Research Question and Data Analysis

Research Question	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Analysis
<b>RQ1:</b> To what extent are there statistically significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment?	Participation in the Honors College versus not participating in the Honors College	Items on the TCI (Average scores per construct) Factors three and six (Academic adjustment); Factors one and eight (Social adjustment); Factors four and five (Personal-emotional adjustment); Factors two and seven (Institutional adjustment)	One-way MANOVA The factors were participation in the HC versus not participating in the HC. Dependent variables: Factors three and six (academic); Factors one and eight (social); Factors four and five (Personal-emotional);

			Factors two and seven (Institutional)
<b>RQ2:</b> To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?	Participating in the Honors College versus not participating in the Honors College  Level of expected adjustment	Students' first semester GPA (Students attaining a 3.0 and above will be classified as successful).	A logistic regression was conducted. The factors were the classification of the participant (honors student versus non-honors student), and the level of expected adjustment. Dependent variables: Students' first semester GPA
<b>RQ3:</b> To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict the retention status of honors students versus non-honors students?	Participation in the Honors College versus not participating in the Honors College  Level of expected adjustment	Retention status of students from fall to spring semester	A logistic regression was conducted. The factors were the classification of the participant (honors student versus non-honors student), and the level of expected adjustment. Dependent variables: Retention status

### Research Design

This study utilized a non-experimental ex post facto design in which archival data will be examined between the years of 2007 and 2010. Three research questions underwent data analysis. For the first research question, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between honors college students and non-honors students. Logistic

regressions were also conducted on the next two research questions. The first research question will examine the extent to which there are statistically significant differences between honors and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment. The independent variable was whether or not a student is a member of the Honors College. The dependent variables were the students' responses to the items on the TCI (Factors one through eight). The second research question examined the extent to which the level of expected adjustment predicts the first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students. The independent variables, or factors, were whether or not a student is a member of the Honors College, and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variable was the students' first semester GPA. The final question examined the extent to which the level of expected adjustment predicts the retention status of honors and non-honors students. The independent variables, or factors, were whether or not a student is a member of the Honors College, and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variable was the students' retention status after their first semester.

It was through Baker and Siryk's conceptual model of adjustment that these questions were analyzed. In Baker and Siryk's (1984) model the overarching definition of adjustment is conceptualized as consisting of four distinct components which in combination inform the concept known as overall adjustment. The four components or aspects are made up of academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. A factor analysis was completed on the TCI in which nine factors were identified (Pickering et al., 2000). The nine factors on the TCI align well with Baker and Siryk's model of adjustment. Factors one (college involvement), and eight (social orientation) are consistent with the way in which Baker and Siryk define social

adjustment. Factors two (influences in college choice), and seven (institutional commitment), are consistent with Baker and Siryk's definition of institutional adjustment. Factors three (student role commitment), and six (self-confidence) are consistent with Baker and Siryk's conceptualization of academic adjustment. Finally, factors four (health orientation), and five (personal/academic concerns) are consistent with Baker and Siryk's conceptualization of personal-emotional adjustment. The factors from the TCI will be defined according to Baker and Siryk's model. This will allow for the comparison of expected adjustment levels of honors and non-honors students.

Each of the three research questions examined expected adjustment. The extant literature emphasizes the impact that expectations play on adjustment. Expectations are important predictors of students' adjustment to college (Jackson et al., 2000). This would indicate the significant impact that expected adjustment has on a student's actual adjustment. The format of the TCI requires students, using self report, to assess their attitudes, personality, and behaviors in high school and also requires them to make predictions about their expected performance in college. Its structure, which requires students to make predictions about their performance, is closely linked to expected adjustment which was examined in this study.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study consisted of a sample of randomly selected 200 first year honors students and a sample of randomly selected 200 non-honors students. A priori power analysis was conducted to determine the number of participants needed to lead to statistically significant results. Utilizing a medium effect size of .05 at Power = .80, 128



participants' scores on the TCI were needed (Cohen,1992). All 400 of the students in the sample will have filled out the TCI during the orientation process. Both samples were anonymous, and no identifying information was made available. An Honors College staff member sent students' names to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment where all identifying information was recoded and made unavailable to the researcher. The data collected consisted of whether a student was a member of the Honors College, and his or her responses on the TCI as they related to expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment.

Of the 393 participants in this study, 197 (49.9%) were in the Honors College, while 196 (50.1%) were not. The gender of the participants included 223 (56.7%) females, and 170 (43.3%) males. Archival data between the years of 2007 and 2010 were examined for this study. The sample included 110 (28.0%) of students who entered the university in 2007, 117 (29.8%) entered in 2008, 101 (25.7%) entered in 2009, and 65 (16.5%) entered in 2010. Finally, the racial makeup of the participants included students who identified as White (63.1%) or Black (16.5%). A smaller percentage identified as Hispanic (3.3%) and other (3.1%).

### **Human Subjects Review**

Due to the fact that this study is a non-experimental ex post facto design, the potential of harm that could come to participants is minimal. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Old Dominion University before any data was collected and analyzed. This form is located in Appendix B This study was be classified as exempt as the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at Old

Dominion University ensured that the responses of the participants were anonymous, and the researcher had no access to identifying information. The data was destroyed at the completion of the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The *Transition to College Inventory*, or TCI (see Appendix A), has been used at Old Dominion University since 1993 with the specific purpose of identifying students who may be in danger of experiencing academic difficulty. In the current study, the data collected from the TCI was analyzed to assess expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. The TCI is administered to all incoming first year students the summer prior to their first semester at Old Dominion University. The TCI was developed to identify students who may experience academic difficulty which could later lead to a withdrawal from the institution (Pickering et al., n.d.). The TCI was designed based on the research related to the effects of noncognitive factors on academic difficulty and withdrawal from the institution (Pickering et al., n.d.). While the TCI was developed to assess a student's potential risks for academic difficulty, the items are also consistent with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment. The format of the TCI requires students, using self report, to assess their attitudes, personality, and behaviors in high school and also requires them to make predictions about their expected performance in college. The inventory is made up of 116 items, and is related to the following: Reasons for attending college, Reasons for Choosing this College, Experiences During the Senior Year of High School, Self Ratings of Abilities and Traits,

Attitudes About Being a College Student, Predictions About Academic Success at College, Predictions About Involvement in College.

The TCI was factor analyzed in 2003 (Pickering et al., n.d.). The items on the assessment that did not load well on a particular factor were taken out. An exploratory factor analysis was then conducted with the result being the emergence of nine factors among the 116 items. The nine factors include: 1) college involvement, 2) influences in college choice, 3) student role commitment, 4) athletic orientation, 5) personal/ academic concerns, 6) self-confidence, 7) institutional commitment, 8) social orientation, and 9) independent activity focus. This assessment was selected for this study because it is currently being used at Old Dominion University. The TCI was also selected based on considerations of face validity, and the fact that the items align well with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment. An expert panel was also utilized to further establish face validity. The panel selected items from the TCI based on their relationship to the different types of adjustment as defined by Baker and Siryk (1984; 1986). This process entailed experts in the field of higher education translating the items on the TCI into the framework of Baker and Siryk's (1984; 1986) model of adjustment based on their expertise.

Despite the fact that the SACQ addresses adjustment directly, according to McGrath and Braunstein (1997) issues surrounding student adjustment differs depending on the institution. They go on to state that institutions must conduct "in house research" to best identify the institution's predictors for adjustment (p.239). This study will be "in-house research" using an assessment that is utilized at this particular institution. The

actual data from the TCI, between the years of 2007 and 2010, was obtained using a request form that was submitted to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

The TCI has been found to be reliable and valid (Pickering et al., n.d.).

Reliability was shown by the completion of the factor analysis which led to the identification of the nine factors. The nine factors include: 1) college involvement, 2) influences in college choice, 3) student role commitment, 4) athletic orientation, 5) personal/ academic concerns, 6) self-confidence, 7) institutional commitment, 8) social orientation, and 9) independent activity focus. The factor analysis was conducted by correlations of each item with each other (Pickering et al., n.d.).

A logistic regression was conducted that speaks to the criterion-related validity of the TCI. It showed that five of the nine factors were predictors of academic difficulty at the end of the first semester (Pickering et al., n.d.). For the current study, the eight factors were utilized due to their alignment with Baker and Siryk's (1984; 1986) model of adjustment which includes not only academic adjustment, but social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment as well.

### **Adapting the TCI to the Four Aspects of Adjustment**

An expert panel was utilized to select items from the TCI based on their relationship to the different types of adjustment as defined by Baker and Siryk (1984; 1986). This process entailed experts in the field of higher education translating the items on the TCI into the framework of Baker and Siryk's (1984; 1986) model of adjustment based on their expertise. The experts for this study consisted of Dr. Worth Pickering, the Assistant Vice President (Institutional Research and Assessment), Mr. G.W. Thompson, the Director of the Center for Major Exploration, and Mrs. Lisa Mayes, the Assistant

Dean for Planning and Administration. Dr. Worth Pickering, along with Dr. James Calliotte, developed the TCI. The other members of this panel have had extensive experience with the TCI, and have a working knowledge of college student adjustment. Both members have advised students and developed programming related to adjustment difficulties. The items on the TCI that correspond to a particular component of Baker and Siryk's model share certain commonalities with that component. Each member of the panel was requested to rank the list of each item on the TCI, by way of paper instructions, for relevance for academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment.

According to the procedures consistent with qualitative research, an expert panel is utilized so that the experts can provide "high-quality verity and views about the issue(s) under investigation" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010, p.103). This provides the researcher with insight into the research topic under study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010). For this particular study a modified version of the expert panel was used. The information gained from the experts related to their professional opinions of the relevance of academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment to the items on the TCI was useful and adjusted the thinking about the concepts.

Certain items were selected from the TCI based their relationship to the different types of adjustment as defined by Baker and Siryk. The process used to translate the items on the TCI into the framework of Baker and Siryk's model of adjustment was that of rational selection. The items on the TCI that correspond to a particular component of Baker and Siryk's model share certain commonalities with that component. The selection was made as follows: The items on the TCI that correspond to Baker and Siryk's definition of academic adjustment all share a common denominator in that they address a

student's scholarship. For example, the item that speaks to a student's motivation to be successful in college directly addresses the student's attitude toward academics. The items on the TCI that correspond to Baker and Siryk's definition of social adjustment all share a common denominator in that they address a student's ability to adjust to social demands. For example, the item that addresses a student's participation in college social life directly addresses the student's desire to interact socially with other students. The items on the TCI that correspond to Baker and Siryk's definition of personal-emotional adjustment all share a common denominator in that they address a student's ability to cope with psychological and physical stressors. For example, the item that addresses the concept of feeling depressed directly relates to psychological stress. Finally, the items on the TCI that correspond to Baker and Siryk's definition of institutional adjustment all share a common denominator in that they address a student's bond with the institution. For example, the item that addresses a student's desire to return for the fall semester of his or her sophomore year directly relates to the student's bond with the institution.

Table 2 will further explain how the items on the TCI align with Baker and Siryk's conceptual model of adjustment.

**Table 2:** Adjustment Definitions and Corresponding TCI Items

<b>Definition of adjustment according to Baker and Siryk (1984 &amp; 1986)</b>	<b>Corresponding items on the TCI</b>
<b>Academic adjustment:</b> A student's ability to adapt to the educational demands characteristic of the college environment, his or her attitude towards the work being presented, as	<b>Factor 3 (Student Role Commitment):</b> 1. To be able to get a better job 2. To broaden my perspectives 4. To be able to make more money 5. To learn more about things which interest me 6. To attain feelings of accomplishment and self-

<p>well as the effectiveness of his or her efforts towards the academic work. It also includes a student's satisfaction with what the academic environment can offer in the way of classes and programs.</p>	<p>confidence</p> <p>8. To prepare myself for graduate or professional school</p> <p>32. Studying or doing homework</p> <p>41. Playing computer games</p> <p>42. Using the internet</p> <p>44. Failed to complete a homework assignment on time</p> <p>46. Had difficulty concentrating on assignments</p> <p>47. Made careless mistakes on tests</p> <p>49. Was too bored to study</p> <p>65. It is important to me to be a good student</p> <p>66. I expect to work hard at studying in college</p> <p>67. I am committed to being an active participant in my college studies</p> <p>68. I will be proud to do well academically in college</p> <p>69. I want others to see me as an effective student in college</p> <p>70. I admire people who are good students</p> <p>71. I find learning to be fulfilling</p> <p>72. I will allow sufficient time for studying in college</p> <p>73. I see myself continuing my education in some way throughout my entire life</p> <p>74. I feel really motivated to be successful in my college career</p> <p>76. I don't seem to have the drive to get my work done</p> <p>77. Nationally, about 50% of college students typically leave before receiving a degree.</p> <p>79. Graduate with honors</p> <p>80. Miss more than one class per week</p> <p>82. Earn at least a "B" average</p> <p>83. Study with other students</p> <p>84. Fail one or more courses</p> <p>85. Find my courses boring</p>
--	---

	<p>87. Complete a bachelor's degree at this college</p> <p>89. Be placed on academic probation</p> <p>90. Drop out of college temporarily</p> <p>91. Drop out of college permanently</p> <p>97. Use the library as a place to study and do research for your classes.</p> <p>107. Use what you learn in classes in your outside life</p> <p>108. Actively participate in your classes.</p> <p>6. To attain feelings of accomplishment and self-confidence</p> <p>8. to prepare myself for graduate or professional school</p> <p>73. I don't seem to have the drive to get my work done</p> <p>68. I don't seem to get going on anything important</p> <p><b>Factor 6 (Self-Confidence):</b></p> <p>51. General academic ability</p> <p>52. Mathematical ability</p> <p>53. Reading comprehension</p> <p>54. Study skills</p> <p>56. Writing ability</p> <p>58. Drive to achieve</p> <p>60. Leadership ability</p> <p>78. Please check the one description below that you feel best represents your career plans at this time</p> <p>55. Time management skills</p>
<p><b>Social Adjustment:</b> A student's ability to adapt to the social demands in the college environment, such as participation in social activities,</p>	<p><b>Factor 1 (College Involvement):</b></p> <p>3. To get away from home</p> <p>39. Participating in organized clubs and groups</p> <p>34. Talking with teachers outside of class</p> <p>39. Participating in organized</p>



<p>meeting new people, and coping with being away from home.</p>	<p>clubs and groups  40. Watching TV  96. Use the library as a place to study and do research for your classes  99. Think about course material outside of class and/ or discuss it with other students  100. Participate in cultural events  101. Use the student center as a place to eat and/ or socialize with friends  102. Use campus athletic facilities for individual or group recreational activities  103. Participate in campus clubs and organizations  104. Read articles or books or have conversations with others on campus that will help you learn more about yourself  105. Make friends with students who are different from you  106. Have serious discussions with students whose beliefs and opinions are different from yours  106. Use what you learn in classes in your outside life  107. Use what you learn in classes in your outside life  108. Actively participate in your classes  111. Do volunteer work  113. Be elected an officer in an organization  114. Participate in varsity sports  81. Develop a good relationship with at least one faculty member or an advisor  82. Study with other students  <b>Factor 8 (Social Orientation):</b>  10. To develop interpersonal skills  59. Popularity with the opposite sex</p>
--	---

	60. Popularity with the same sex 61. Leadership ability 64. Interpersonal communication skills 96. Have serious disagreements with my family regarding my personal, social, academic, or career decisions 98. Talk with faculty informally outside of class 9. To participate in college social life 45. Drank alcoholic beverages 33. Socializing with friends 37. Partying 112. Establish some close friendships with students I meet during my freshman year
<b>Personal-emotional adjustment:</b> A student's ability to cope with the psychological and physical stressors that are characteristic of the college environment	<b>Factor 4 (Athletic/ Health Orientation):</b> 62. Physical health 29. Opportunity to participate in varsity athletics 7. To develop and use my athletic skills 35. Participating in organized sports 36. Exercising on my own 102. Use campus athletic facilities for individual or group recreational activities 114. Participate in varsity sports <b>Factor 5 (Personal/ Academic Concerns):</b> 63. Self confidence 45. Drank alcoholic beverages 46. Had difficulty concentrating on assignments 48. Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do 49. Was too bored to study 50. Felt depressed 75. I don't seem to get going on anything important 86. Receive emotional support

	<p>from my family if I experience problems in college</p> <p>88. If needed, seek assistance for personal, career, or academic problems from the appropriate office on campus</p> <p>109. Work full-time while attending college</p> <p>110. Work part-time while attending college</p> <p>115. Feel overwhelmed occasionally by all I have to do</p> <p>95. Have serious disagreements with my family regarding my personal, social, academic, or career decisions</p>
<p><b>Institutional Adjustment:</b> A student's bond with his or her institution, as well as the student's commitment to the goals of the institution.</p>	<p><b>Factor 2: (Influences in College Choice)</b></p> <p>11. Parents</p> <p>12. High school counselor or teacher</p> <p>13. Talking with an ODU admissions staff</p> <p>14. High school visits by the admissions staff</p> <p>15. Old Dominion students who are friends or acquaintances</p> <p>16. Old Dominion faculty member</p> <p>17. Old Dominion recruitment publications</p> <p>18. Saturday Open House/visitation days</p> <p>19. Old Dominion's good academic reputation</p> <p>20. I was offered financial aid</p> <p>21. Cultural Diversity</p> <p>22. Old Dominion's good social reputation</p> <p>23. Availability of my chosen major</p> <p>26. Old Dominion's graduates get good jobs</p> <p>27. Cost of attending this college</p> <p>28. Opportunity to work part-time</p>

	30. The appearance of Old Dominion's campus 31. Availability of extracurricular activities 25. This college's attractive location <b>Factor 7 (Institutional Commitment):</b> 24. I was not accepted by my higher choice college(s) 86. Complete a bachelor's degree at Old Dominion 91. Transfer to another college at the end of my freshman year 92. Transfer to another college at the end of my freshman year. 93. Transfer to another college sometime in the future 94. Return for the fall semester of my sophomore year 95. Be satisfied with Old Dominion 116. When it came to choosing among all of the colleges to which you were accepted, what choice was this institution?
--	--

### Data Analysis

For the first research question, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences between honors college students and non-honors students. Logistic regressions were conducted on the next two research questions. While the variables are continuous, in this study they were converted into dichotomous variables for analysis. The research questions were analyzed more specifically in the following manner:

Research Question 1: A one-way MANOVA was conducted to ascertain whether there were significant differences between honors students and non-honors students with respect to expected adjustment. The factor was the group the student belonged to (Honors College or non-honors), and the dependent variables were factors one through eight.

Research Question 2: A logistic regression was conducted to ascertain the extent to which the level of expected adjustment predicted a difference in the first semester academic success between honors students and non-honors students. The predictor variables were the classification of the participants (honors students versus non-honors students), and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variable was the students' GPA. Students receiving 3.0 and above were classified as successful.

Research Question 3: A logistic regression was conducted to ascertain the extent to which the level of expected adjustment predicted a difference in the retention status between honors students and non-honors students. The predictor variables were the classification of the participants (honors students versus non-honors students), and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variable was the retention status of the students.

## **Conclusion**

The current study is an effort to add to the current literature by examining not only the expected adjustment of honors college students, but the academic outcomes of participating in an honors college. The TCI was used to assess participants' expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. The current study utilized preexisting data from the TCI collected by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

The adjustment of students to an institution of higher education is an important issue for administrators. A college student's adjustment is linked closely to his or her expectations, and research has indicated that students tend to have romanticized notions pertaining to the institution as they enter (Keup, 2007). While this is a concern for all students, gifted college students have received little attention in the literature. While there are theories presented in the literature, little is known about the outcomes of ability grouping in the form of honors colleges and how these might relate to a student's adjustment. The studies that have been conducted have produced contradictory findings as they relate to the academic outcomes of participating in an honors college. Marsh (1991) found that students attending high ability schools were more likely to select less demanding coursework, and have lower grade point averages than students attending lower ability schools. This finding would suggest that ability grouping is not beneficial to the academic adjustment and success of gifted students. Seeming to confirm this finding, Zeidner and Schleyer (1998), found that students in mixed ability classes had higher academic self-concepts, lower anxiety levels, and higher grades than students in high ability classes.

In a study conducted by Rinn (2007), an assessment was given to students to measure academic self-concept, academic achievement, and aspirations. Participants included gifted college students enrolled in an honors program and gifted students not enrolled in an honors program. The findings directly contradict the previous studies presented above in that the gifted students enrolled in the honors program had higher academic self-concepts than the gifted students not enrolled in the honors program. This finding would suggest that ability grouping is in fact beneficial to the academic adjustment and success of gifted college students.

This study has the potential to inform administrators and university officials as to how honors college students may differ from non-honors students with regards to expected adjustment, and how participation in the Honors College might affect academic adjustment and success.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

### **Review of Study**

The purpose of this study was to (a) examine the differences in expected adjustment between honors students and non-honors students; (b) examine differences in success between honors and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment; and (c) examine differences in the retention status between honors and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment.

The statistical software package, SPSS was used to perform one MANOVA, and two Logistical Regressions on the following hypothesis:

Ho 1: There are no significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' reports on expected adjustment.

Ho 2: The level of expected adjustment will not predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students.

Ho 3: The level of expected adjustment will not predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students.

The independent variable for the first hypothesis was whether or not a student was a member of the Honors College. The dependent variables were the students' responses to the items on the TCI (Factors one through eight). For the second hypothesis the independent variables, or factors, were whether or not a student was a member of the Honors College and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variable was the students' first semester GPA. The independent variables or factors for the final hypothesis were whether or not a student is a member of the Honors College and the level of expected adjustment. The dependent variable was the students' retention status after



their first semester. The variables were collected and compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment where all identifying information was recoded and made unavailable to the researcher. The data collected consisted of whether a student is a member of the Honors College, his or her responses on the TCI as they relate to expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment, the students' GPA, and their retention status. While the TCI data is continuous, in this study it was converted into categories as can be seen in table 3.

The dataset provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment initially included 400 cases. Prior to running the MANOVA and the logistical analyses, the variables honors, fall GPA, and retention were recoded into 0 or 1. The factor variables were recoded into 1, 2, or 3. Table 3 displays the final recoding.

**Table 3:** Final Recoding of Variables within Dataset

Variables	Levels	Recoded
Honors	Honors	0 = not in HC
	Non-Honors	1 = member of HC
Fall GPA	3.0 and above	0 = 0.00 to 2.99
	2.99 and below	1 = 3.00 to 4.00
Retention Status	Retained	0 = not retained
	Not-Retained	1 = retained
Factor 1 (College Involvement)	50.152 and below	1 = 50.152 and below
	50.153 to 59.522	2 = 50.153 to 59.522
	59.523 and above	3 = 59.523 and above
Factor 2 (Influences in College Choice)	30.525 and below	1 = 30.525 and below
	30.526 to 43.095	2 = 30.526
	43.096 and above	3 = 43.096 and above

**Table 3: Continued**

Variables	Levels	Recoded
Factor 3 (Student Role Commitment)	19.643 and below	1 = 19.643 and below
	19.644 to 25.777	2 = 19.644 to 25.777
	25.778 and above	3 = 25.778 and above
Factor 4 (Health Orientation)	18.507 and below	1 = 18.507 and below
	18.508 to 22.673	2 = 18.508 to 22.673
	22.674 and above	3 = 22.674 and above
Factor 5 (Personal/Academic Concerns)	26.099 and below	1 = 26.099 and below
	26.100 to 33.261	2 = 26.100 to 33.261
	33.262 and above	3 = 33.262
Factor 6 (Self-Confidence)	12.979 and below	1 = 12.979 and below
	12.980 to 20.261	2 = 12.980 to 20.261
	20.262 and above	3 = 20.262 and above
Factor 7 (Institutional Commitment)	5.955 and below	1 = 5.955 and below
	5.956 to 10.185	2 = 5.956 to 10.185
	10.186 and above	3 = 10.186 and above
Factor 8 (Social Orientation)	13.835 and below	1 = 13.835 and below
	13.836 to 17.125	2 = 13.836 to 17.125
	17.126 and above	3 = 17.126 and above

Utilizing a MANOVA and logistic regressions as statistical tests requires that the dependent variables be only moderately correlated. A correlation analysis was run to see the level of correlation between the dependent variables. There were no correlations in the .8 and .9 range, so multicollinearity was not an issue for this study.

When utilizing a logistic regression as a statistical test it is necessary to be sure that no cases are missing variables. Before the analyses were run, cases missing variables

were deleted from the dataset. For example, if there were cases missing scores for one of the eight factors, the whole case was excluded from the dataset. Not all of the 400 initial cases were included in the actual statistical analyses. For all three hypotheses,  $n = 393$  cases were included in the analysis.

The following tests were conducted for the MANOVA and logistic regressions. For the MANOVA three specific tests were examined: 1) Box's M, 2) Wilks's Lambda, and 3) Levene's Test of Equality. The p-value or statistical significance was set at  $p = 0.01$  for the first hypothesis. For the logistic regressions five specific tests were examined: 1) Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients, 2) Hosmer and Lemeshow Test (model fit), 3) classification table, 4) R Square (Cox & Snell R Square and Nagelkerke R Square), and 5) significance of predictor variables (Wald test). The p-value or statistical significance was set at  $p = 0.05$  for hypothesis 2 and 3.

### **Demographic Statistics**

Of the 393 participants in this study, 197 (49.9%) were in the Honors College, while 196 (50.1%) were not. Of the 393 participants 328 (83.5%) were retained from one semester to the next. The percentage of students not retained was 16.5%. The gender of the participants included 223 (56.7%) females, and 170 (43.3%) males. Archival data between the years of 2007 and 2010 were examined for this study. The sample included 110 (28.0%) of students who entered the university in 2007, 117 (29.8%) entered in 2008, 101 (25.7%) entered in 2009, and 65 (16.5%) entered in 2010. The fall GPA of students in the study were divided into two groups consisting of 0.00 to 2.99, and 3.00 to 4.00. The percentage of students in the 0.00 to 2.99 group was 38.7%, while the percentage of

students in the 3.00 to 4.00 group was 61.3%. Finally, the racial makeup of the participants included students who identified as White (63.1%) or Black (16.5%). A smaller percentage identified as Hispanic (3.3%) and other (3.1%). Table 4 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 4:** Demographic Statistics of Participants (N= 393)

Variable		n	Percentage
Honors			
	No	196	50.1
	Yes	197	49.9
Retained			
	No	65	16.5
	Yes	328	83.5
Gender			
	Male	170	43.4
	Female	223	56.7
Start_term			
	2007	110	28.0
	2008	117	29.8
	2009	101	25.7
	2010	65	16.5
Fall GPA			
	0.0 to 2.99	152	38.7

	3.00 to 4.00	241	61.3
Ethnicity			
	Black	65	16.5
	White	13	3.3
	Hispanic	12	3.1
	Other	248	63.1

Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics for the factors. The factors include: 1) college involvement, 2) influences in college choice, 3) student role commitment, 4) athletic orientation, 5) personal/ academic concerns, 6) self-confidence, 7) institutional commitment, 8) social orientation.

**Table 5:** Descriptive Statistics of Factors 1-8

Factor	Mean	SD
Factor 1: College Involvement	54.84	4.68
Factor 2: Influences in College Choice	36.83	6.27
Factor 3: Student Role Commitment	22.71	3.05
Factor 4: Athletic Orientation	20.58	2.09
Factor 5: Personal/ Academic Concerns	29.68	3.60

Factor 6: Self-Confidence	16.60	3.64
Factor 7: Institutional Commitment	8.08	2.12
Factor 8: Social Orientation	15.46	1.65

## Data Analysis

**Research Question 1:** To what extent are there statistically significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment?

**Ho 1:** There are no significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' reports on expected adjustment.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess the group differences between honors students and non-honors students. The Box's Test of Equality of Covariance was conducted to check for homogeneity of variance. Box's M indicated a significant value ( $p = .639$ ) which indicated that homogeneity of variance was not violated. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances initially indicated that the assumption of equality of variances was violated. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), if this assumption is violated a more conservative alpha level must be selected. When a significance value of .01 was used, the test indicated that the assumption of equality of variance had not been violated. The independent variable for this research question was whether or not the student was a member of the Honors College, and the dependent variables were factors one through eight. The MANOVA indicated that there is a significant difference between honors students and non-honors student reports' on expected adjustment (Wilks's Lambda = .839,  $F(8, 384) = 9.18$ ,  $p = .000$ , partial eta squared = .16). The effect size indicates that 16.1% of the variance in the self-reports on expected adjustment (factors one through eight) can be explained by whether a student is a member of the Honors College or not. The results for the dependent variables were taken into consideration separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .001. Factor 2 (influences in college choice), reached statistical significance,  $F(1, 391) = 13.05$ ,

$p = .000$  and partial eta squared = .032. The effect size indicates that 3.2% of the variance in scores is explained by group (honors vs. non-honors). Factor 6 (self-confidence), also reached statistical significance,  $F(1, 391) = 49.86$ ,  $p = .000$  and partial eta squared = .113. The effect size indicates that 11.3% of the variance in scores is explained by group (honors vs. non-honors). Based on these results the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 6:** Univariate Statistics for Honors vs. Non-honors

Dependent Variable	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Factor 1	.13	1	.13	.33	.567
Factor 2	4.07	1	4.07	13.06	.000
Factor 3	.02	1	.02	.09	.771
Factor 4	.02	1	.02	.07	.793
Factor 5	.00	1	.00	.01	.927
Factor 6	11.42	1	11.42	49.86	.000
Factor 7	.12	1	.12	1.06	.304
Factor 8	.02	1	.02	.11	.743

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?



**Ho 2:** The level of expected adjustment will not predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?

The second research question was addressed by utilizing a logistic regression. The level of expected adjustment and the group the students belonged to (honors vs. non-honors) were entered in as the independent variables with first semester GPA being the dependent variable. The full model with the two predictors was statistically significant,  $X^2(9, N = 393) = 86.61, p < .001$ . This indicates that the model, using the independent variables, is able to predict first semester academic success. The model explained between 19.8% (Cox and Snell R square) and 26.8% (Nagelkerke R square) of the variance in first semester GPA. It also correctly classified 71.5% of cases. The Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test displayed a chi-square value that indicated support for the model  $X^2(8, N = 393) = 8.68, p = .37$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Finally, the Wald test displayed which predictor variables contributed significantly to the predictive ability of the model. It indicated that factor 2 (influences in college choice), ( $p = .047$ ) and group ( $p = .000$ ) reliably predicted first semester academic success. Table 7 displays the logistic regression predicting the likelihood of first semester academic success.

**Table 7:** Group (honors vs. non-honors) and Expected Adjustment Predicting Academic Success

B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds Ratio	95% C.I. for Exp(B)
---	------	------	----	---	------------	---------------------

							Lower	Upper
Factor 1	-.194	.216	.811	1	.368	.823	.539	1.257
Factor 2	.450	.226	3.962	1	.047	1.569	1.007	2.445
Factor 3	-.313	.238	1.734	1	.188	.731	.459	1.165
Factor 4	.264	.203	1.685	1	.194	1.302	.874	1.940
Factor 5	.210	.222	.894	1	.344	1.233	.799	1.905
Factor 6	-.257	.283	.828	1	.363	.773	.444	1.346
Factor 7	.086	.354	.060	1	.807	1.090	.545	2.180
Factor 8	.236	.273	.751	1	.386	1.266	.742	2.161
Honors	1.796	.256	49.034	1	.000	6.023	3.644	9.956

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students?

Ho 3: The level of expected adjustment will not predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students?

The third research question was also addressed by utilizing a logistic regression. The level of expected adjustment and the group the students belonged to (honors vs. non-honors) were entered in as the independent variables with retention status being the

dependent variable. The full model with the two predictors was not statistically significant,  $X^2(9, N = 393) = 11.103, p > .05$ . This indicates that the model, using the independent variables, is not able to distinguish between students who will be retained and those who will not be retained. Therefore the null will be accepted. The model explained between 2.8% (Cox and Snell R square) and 4.7% (Nagelkerke R square) of the variance in the retention status. It also correctly classified 71.5% of cases. The Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test displayed a chi-square value that indicated support for the model  $X^2(8, N = 393) = 8.81, p = .36$ .

Finally, the Wald test displayed which predictor variables contributed significantly to the predictive ability of the model. It indicated that group ( $p = .048$ ) reliably predicted retention status. Table 8 displays the logistic regression predicting the likelihood of a student being retained from one semester to the next.

**Table 8:** Group (honors vs. non-honors) and Expected Adjustment Predicting Retention Status

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds Ratio	95% C.I. for Exp(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Factor 1	-.053	.254	.043	1	.835	.949	.577	1.560
Factor 2	-.042	.262	.025	1	.873	.959	.574	1.603
Factor 3	-.314	.278	1.281	1	.258	.730	.424	1.258

Factor 4	.153	.240	.406	1	.524	1.165	.728	1.864
Factor 5	-.202	.268	.569	1	.451	.817	.483	1.382
Factor 6	-.297	.329	.813	1	.367	.743	.390	1.417
Factor 7	-.323	.390	.688	1	.407	.724	.337	1.553
Factor 8	-.139	.316	.194	1	.660	.870	.468	1.617
Honors	.604	.306	3.902	1	.048	1.829	1.005	3.330

---

### Summary

Three research questions and null hypotheses were addressed. The following null hypotheses were rejected:

Ho 1: There are no significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' reports on expected adjustment.

Ho 2: The level of expected adjustment will not predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students.

The analysis failed to reject one hypothesis:

The following chapter will address the results of the study, the limitations of the study, and the recommendations for future research. Finally, the implications for counselor educators will be addressed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to address the gap present in the literature regarding academic success and adjustment, and how it might relate to high-achieving students. Persistence, which is an indicator of success for institutions of higher education, remains problematic (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999). According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2009), at four-year institutions only six out of ten students actually go on to complete their degrees. This attrition rate, while concerning, is often a result of adjustment difficulties (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Rickinson & Rutherford, 1995). College student adjustment and academic success have been directly linked to student retention. A number of students who experience difficulties in their adjustment end up withdrawing from the institution (Baker & Siryk, 1986). The complexities pertaining to retention can have negative effects for students in the form of unrealized personal and educational goals. Therefore the present study was conducted to further examine aspects of expected adjustment, how it relates to honors students, and its potential to predict academic success and retention. A college student's adjustment is linked closely to his or her expectations, and research has indicated that students tend to have romanticized notions pertaining to the institution as they enter (Keup, 2007). While this is a concern for all students, gifted college students have received little attention in the literature. While there are theories presented in the literature, little is known about the outcomes of ability grouping in the form of honors colleges and how these might relate to a student's adjustment. Specifically, this study was conducted to better understand the overarching concern regarding *How do honors students compare with non-honors students in expected adjustment and does expected adjustment and participation in the*

*Honors College predict academic success and retention?* This study has the potential to inform administrators and university officials as to how honors college students may differ from non-honors students with regards to expected adjustment, and how participation in the Honors College might affect academic adjustment and success.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance was used to access the group differences between honors students and non-honors students with respect to expected adjustment. Two logistic regressions were conducted to determine the extent to which level of expected adjustment predicts academic success and retention status. Once cases missing variables were deleted from the dataset, 393 cases remained (N = 393).

### **Examination of Research Questions**

This study examined the differences between honors students and non-honors students in their expected adjustment, and how participation in honors programming affects academic adjustment and success. As previous research indicated, little is known about the outcomes of ability grouping in the form of gifted programming for college students, and how this might relate to a student's academic adjustment and success (Rinn, 2007).

#### *Differences in Expected Adjustment*

The first research question examined the differences between honors students and non-honors students with regard to expected adjustment. The analysis utilized was a Multivariate Analysis of Variance. The dependent variables were factors one through eight from the TCI. The factor for the MANOVA was the group the student belonged to (honors vs. non-honors). The results indicated that self-reports of expected adjustment were significantly different between the two groups of participants. Upon further

investigation of the dependent variables, the analysis indicated that the only significant differences between honors students and non-honors students were on factors two (influences in college choice) and six (self-confidence). For the purpose of this study, factor two, or influences in college choice, has been deemed to be consistent with the definition of institutional adjustment. Influences in college choice describes how important external factors are in helping students to decide what college to attend. For factor two honors students had higher mean values than non-honors students ( $M = 2.087$  and  $M = 1.883$ ). Specifically, honors students' self-reports indicated that they are more likely to rely on external factors in making the decision to enter a particular institution of higher education. This finding is consistent with previous research that has indicated that for academically successful students, the external factor of making informal contacts with professors are a predictor of persistence (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). These results indicate that honors students are more likely to be influenced by parents, high school counselors, and friends as it pertains to deciding on an institution of higher education. Herbert and McBee (2007) found that gifted high school students often feel isolated due to the fact that their intellectual needs are not being met. This seemingly supports the finding that honors students, in light of feeling that their intellectual needs were not met in high school, would be more inclined to respond positively to faculty members from the college, and admissions representatives on campus.

For factor six, or self-confidence, students must rate themselves on certain abilities and traits as compared to the average person. The items include: General academic ability, reading comprehension, study skills, time management skills, and drive to achieve. For factor six non-honors students had higher mean values than honors

students ( $M = 2.168$  and  $M = 1.827$ ). For the purposes of this study factor six (self-confidence) is deemed to be consistent with the definition of academic adjustment. Specifically, non-honors students' self-reports indicated that they had more confidence in their academic skills and abilities even though the mean GPA for non-honors students is lower than that for honors students. This finding is consistent with previous research that indicated that students tend to overestimate their abilities to adjust academically (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). The current finding seems to contradict the findings of Tinto (1993), which indicated that students with high levels of confidence in their intellectual ability were able to successfully adjust to the academic demands. The findings are also in direct contradiction to a study conducted by Rinn (2007), which indicated that students enrolled in honors programs had higher academic self-concepts. Studies indicate that students who entered college with unrealistically high expectations were less successful academically than students with lower, but more accurate grade expectations (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). It is possible that high-achieving students are more realistic in their expectations. According to Pancer et al. (2000) students with more complex expectations about their transition to these institutions were better adjusted. It is this lack of understanding of the different expectations that can lead students to struggle academically, and can affect adjustment (Kern, Fagley, & Miller, 1998). It may also be the case that gifted college students have more complex expectations.

#### *Academic Success and Levels of Expected Adjustment*

The second research question examined the extent to which there are statistically significant differences in the first semester academic success between honors students and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment. For this research



question the independent variables were the levels of expected adjustment and the group the student belonged to (honors vs. non-honors). The dependent variable was the students' GPA. Results from the logistic regression indicated that factor two (influences in college choice), and the group the student belonged to (honors vs. non-honors) significantly predicted academic success. For factor two students must rate the degree of importance they would attach to each item. The items include: Parents, high school counselor or teacher, a faculty member(s) from this college, and recruitment publications. These findings support and contradict previous research. A study conducted by Pflaum et al. (1985) suggested that honors program participation had a positive influence on students' academic achievement. Pflaum (1985) hypothesized that students belonging to an honors program that places a high value on academic achievement will also value this behavior. This indicates that honors programs increase the likelihood that students' will achieve academically. In stark contradiction to the findings of this study is a study conducted by Zeidner and Schleyer (1998), which compared gifted students in ability grouped classes to gifted students in mixed ability classes. The results indicated that students in ability grouped classes such as honors classes had lower grades.

Findings from the current study also seem to contradict the theory of relative deprivation, which indicates that a highly selective environment will result in students demonstrating lower academic achievement (Davis, 1966). Honors College students at ODU must take at least four lower division honors courses. These courses are exclusively for honors students, and for this reason would be considered highly selective environments.

As mentioned above, factor two indicates a student's tendency to rely on external factors in making the decision to enter a particular institution of higher education. These results indicate that honors students are more likely to be influenced by parents, high school counselors, and friends as it pertains to deciding on an institution of higher education. The fact that some gifted high school students feel as though their intellectual needs have not been met would naturally incline them to be attracted to the academic possibilities that would be presented to them at admissions events and from potential faculty members (Herbert & McBee, 2007). This could also potentially explain why honors students would be more likely to be influenced by other items in factor two such as availability of my chosen major, and ODU's good academic reputation in efforts to best meet their intellectual needs.

Factors one, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight did not significantly predict academic success. Factors one (college involvement), and eight (social orientation) are aligned with social adjustment for the current study. Social adjustment has been assessed by how well students are functioning in their social environment, their involvement in social activities, and their satisfaction with social aspects of the university experience (Friedlander et al., 2007). Social support can assist students as they transition to the institution, which improves overall adjustment and can ultimately affect academic adjustment (Friedlander et al., 2007). However, academic adjustment differs from academic success as defined in the current study. According to Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986), academic adjustment is defined as a student's ability to adapt to the educational demands characteristic of the college environment, their attitude towards the work being presented, as well as the effectiveness of their efforts towards the academic work.

Academic adjustment is also characterized by a student's satisfaction with what the academic environment can offer in the way of classes and programs offered. This definition differs from academic success being described as a 3.0 GPA or above. While social adjustment is directly linked to overall adjustment and academic adjustment, it does not predict academic successes as defined in the current study.

Factors three (student role commitment), and six (self-confidence) also did not significantly predict academic success in the current study. These factors aligned with the concept of academic adjustment. As mentioned above, Baker and Siryk's (1984 & 1986) definition of academic adjustment is different from the definition of academic success as defined in the current study. Academic adjustment addresses more than a student's grade point average. This could possibly explain why academic adjustment did not significantly predict academic success. A student could be considered academically adjustment, meaning that he or she is satisfied with his or her academic environment, and still not be considered academically successful as it was defined in the current study,

Factors four (health orientation), and five (personal/ academic concerns) are aligned with personal-emotional adjustment for the purposes of the current study. Neither factor significantly predicted academic success. According to Baker and Siryk (1984 & 1986), personal-emotional adjustment is a student's ability to cope with the psychological and physical stressors that are characteristic of the college environment. A student's personal-emotional adjustment can have an effect on his or her academic, social, and institutional adjustment. Students who are not healthy psychologically or physically will have difficulty excelling academically, engaging socially, and bonding with their particular institutions. According to the American College Health Association (2006),

undergraduate students reported stress as being a major factor that impacted their academic performance. While personal-emotional adjustment did not significantly predict academic success, psychological and physical health if not taken care of, can ultimately have an effect on a student's GPA.

Pritchard et al. (2007) found that college students experienced a decrease in their physical and psychological health during their first year, with students scoring higher in perfectionism more likely to report physical health problems. This finding directly links to the current study due to the fact that according to LoCicero and Ashby (2000), college students in honors programs are more likely to be maladaptive perfectionists. Maladaptive perfectionism has been linked to depression, social isolation, and academic difficulty (Cross, Gust-Brey, & Ball, 2002). Personal-emotional adjustment did not predict academic success, but it a factor that must be considered especially for honors students.

Finally, factor seven (institutional commitment) did not significantly predict academic success. Factor seven is aligned with institutional adjustment, as is Factor 2 (influences in college choice), which did predict academic success. Even though they both measure institutional adjustment for the purposes of this study, factor seven encompasses items such as: I was not accepted by my higher choice college(s), and transfer to another college sometime in the future. Institutional adjustment or attachment is defined by Baker and Siryk (1984) as a student's sense of loyalty to a specific institution, and how well a student has bonded with his or her institution. For the current study, the student's bond with the institution is more of a predictor of academic success as opposed to sense of loyalty to the institution.

Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, and Woods (2009), conducted a study in which they examined whether sense of belonging mediated the relationship between social and academic integration. The results of the study indicated that a student's sense of belonging has a direct positive effect on his or her institutional commitment (Hausmann et al., 2009). Previous research found social integration to have a direct effect on institutional commitment, but it was found in this study to only have an indirect effect on institutional commitment through its impact on sense of belonging (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993). It is this sense of belonging that has the potential to explain why factor two, with items such as talking with admissions staff, high school visits by admissions staff, and ODU students who are friends, would predict academic success. It is these early contacts that could potentially impact sense of belonging.

#### *Retention and Levels of Expected Adjustment*

The third research question examined the extent to which there are statistically significant differences in the retention status between honors students and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment. The independent variables for this research question were the levels of expected adjustment and the group the student belongs to (honors vs. non-honors). The dependent variable was the retention status of the students. Results from this logistic regression indicated that there were no statistically significant difference in the retention status between honors students and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment. These results indicated that neither honors college status nor level of expected adjustment predicted retention status. This finding contradicts the research conducted by Pflaum, Pascarella, and Duby (1985) in which they found that students participating in honors programs were more likely to be

retained. In other previous research it has been found that persistence patterns tend to differ between academically successful student and those who are not successful (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). While neither honors college status nor level of expected adjustment predicted retention, there may be other factors that would predict a student's tendency to persist at an institution of higher education. Future research could examine these factors.

### **Limitations**

One of the major limitations of this study was that the TCI is not an instrument that is usually used to assess college student adjustment. The TCI is utilized only at Old Dominion University, leading to limited generalizability to other universities. Another limitation of this study is the fact that the TCI utilizes self-reported data. There is the possibility that social desirability had an influence on student responses.

Another limitation of this study involves the participants. While  $N = 393$  participants were included in the study, which is well above the number needed according to the priori power analysis, the numbers of minority students included in the study was low. This also leads to challenges in the generalizability of the study.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research directly address the limitations of the study. A major limitation of this study was the fact that the actual honors programming that each student experienced differed. Future research could potentially focus on honors programming in which each student will have the same honors experience. A qualitative study would add beneficial information by providing students with the opportunity to

explain what honors programming looked like for them, and what their individual experiences were in the program.

Future researchers might also focus on conducting a similar study in which an assessment is used that directly measures the concept of adjustment. While researchers have emphasized the importance of conducting “in house research” to best identify the institution’s predictors for adjustment, this study could be replicated using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire which addresses adjustment directly (McGrath & Braunstein, 1997, p.239).

Future research could also focus on replicating the study with a more diverse sample of students. While the role that ethnicity plays with regard to expected adjustment is beyond the scope of this study, further research could lead to gains in the retention and academic success of minority students.

The results of the current study indicate that for factor six (self-confidence), non-honors students’ self-reports indicated that they had more confidence in their academic skills and abilities even though the mean GPA for non-honors students is lower than that for honors students. Research being conducted in the future could focus on this finding, as well as previous research that indicated that students who entered college with unrealistically high expectations were less successful academically (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). Research in the future should focus specifically on creating interventions designed to assist students in developing expectations that are more in line with what they will actually experience. Other research has indicated that positive academic expectations do not necessarily guarantee success, and academic success comes from the ability to adapt to the new environment and to make changes in study habits when necessary (Smith and

Wertlieb, 2005). Future research could also focus on not only developing realistic expectations, but also further examining the relationship between a student's expectations and his or her ability to adjust to the new academic environment.

Finally, future researchers could further examine what factors predict the retention status of students. The results of this study indicated that the level of expected adjustment and honors college status did not in fact predict retention. Previous research has indicated that persistence trends differ between academically successful students and those who are not successful, and that many students cite emotional reasons as to why they withdrew from their institution (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). Future research could focus on the personal-emotional aspects of adjustment and how that might relate to retention status. This would lead to better understanding as to what factors do predict retention status, and how high-achieving students might differ from other students. A mixed methods study could potentially provide useful information. The qualitative piece would provide useful information as to what factors students consider to be impactful in their decisions to persist or withdraw from an institution of higher education. Allowing honors students to specifically address what factors influenced them would add to the literature in this area. These factors could then be further examined in the quantitative piece of the study. The current study also indicated that honors students differed from non-honors students with regard to expected adjustment on factors two (influence in college choice), and six (self-confidence). Using this information, further research could be conducted by focusing on the items in these factors.



## **Implications**

Previous literature has indicated that the experiences of high-achieving college students may differ when compared to other students, but less is known as to the expected adjustment of gifted college students (Hoge & Renzulli, 1993; Marsh et al., 1995).

Research has also indicated that college student adjustment and academic success have been directly linked to student retention. A larger number of students who experience difficulties in their adjustment end up withdrawing from the institution (Baker & Siryk, 1986). Findings from this study indicate that there are differences in the expected adjustment of honors students and non-honors students. Specifically, the two groups differed on factors two (influences in college choice), and six (self-confidence) of the TCI. Factor two was the equivalent of institutional adjustment, and factor six was the equivalent of academic adjustment. Findings from this study also indicate that factor two (influences in college choice), and being in the honors college predicts academic success. This information can assist college counselors in focusing on best practices related to gifted college students and adjustment, and on facilitating academic success. Specifically, it is institutional adjustment that seems to play a part in predicting academic success. College counselors and administrators might develop programming that focuses on aspects of institutional adjustment as a way to increase the likelihood of academic success of all students. Programming should continue to focus on recruitment activities for high achievers that places emphasis on meeting with prospective faculty, interacting with admissions staff, and encouraging students to connect with current ODU students. The current study indicates that honors students rely more on these external factors, so increasing their opportunities to have these experiences will be beneficial. While this will

be beneficial for honors student, it will also benefit non-honors students since this factor predicts academic success. These experiences seem to increase students' bond with their institution, and can be beneficial for honors and non-honors students alike.

Results from the current study also indicated that non-honors students scored higher on factor six (self-confidence), but had lower GPA's than honors students. This is useful information in informing university professionals when working with non-honors students. By focusing on encouraging non-honors students to develop realistic expectations they have the potential perform better academically. This could be done during study skills workshops, and during programming during first year orientation programming. These workshops could also assist these students in developing a plan early in the semester for what to do if they do run into academic difficulty. It is also helpful in informing practices when working with honors students. By being aware that honors students frequently score lower on factor two (self-confidence), workshops could be developed through the Honors College at ODU that speaks to this specifically. These workshops for high-achievers could focus on normalizing their experiences, reframing negative thoughts, and teaching positive affirmations to bolster self-concept.

## Overall Summary

Implications from the current study can potentially assist college counselors and university administrators in developing programming and initiatives to better assist high achieving students as they cope with adjustment concerns unique to this population.

By using the findings of this study as a guide, administrators in higher education and college counselors can both develop programming specific to the needs of their populations.

### *Administrators in Higher Education*

Administrators in higher education can utilize the information that Honors College, or high achieving students are more likely to rely on external factors when making the decision to attend an institution of higher education. This is especially important due to the fact that institutions of higher education are increasing efforts to recruit and retain high-achieving or gifted students (Rinn & Plucker, 2004). Programming designed to attract high achieving students would focus heavily on external factors. Faculty members and admissions representatives could play a large part in this recruitment programming since it is this external perspective that high achieving students seem to prefer. Programming should continue to focus on recruitment activities for high achieving students that places emphasis on meeting with prospective faculty, interacting with admissions staff, and encouraging students to connect with current ODU students. These experiences seem to increase students' bond with their institution, and can be beneficial for honors and non-honors students alike.

### *College Counselors*

College counselors can utilize the findings that indicated that non-honors students' self-reports indicated that they tended to be more confident in their academic ability. Programming for non-honors students could focus on developing realistic expectations since the non-honors students performed worse academically. This could be done during first year orientation through study skills workshops. These workshops could also assist students in developing a plan early in the semester for what to do if they do run into academic difficulty. When designing programming specifically targeting high achieving students, it would be important to focus on the academic adjustment difficulties that these students may experience. Since the results from this study indicate that honors students frequently score lower on factor six (self-confidence), workshops could be developed through the Honors College at ODU that speaks to this specifically. These workshops for high-achievers could focus on normalizing their experiences, reframing negative thoughts, and teaching positive affirmations to bolster self-concept.

The results from this study add to the literature regarding how honors students differ from non-honors students in regards to expected adjustment. Implications from this study will continue to inform professionals in counseling as to best practices when developing programming for honors students as well as non-honors students.

## REFERENCES

- Achter, J. A., Lubinski, D., & Benbow, C. P. (1996). Multipotentiality among the intellectually gifted: "It was never there and already it's vanishing". *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 43(1), 65-76. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.43.1.65
- Alexander, K. L., & Eckland, B. L. (1977). High-school context and college selectivity: Institutional constraints in educational stratification. *Social Forces*, 56(1), 166-188.
- Al-Qaisy, L. M. (2010). Adjustment of college freshman: The importance of gender and the place of residence. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 2(1), 142-150.
- American College Health Association (2006). The national college health assessment. *Journal of the American College Health*, 54(4), 201-211.
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. & Henson, J. W. (1971). New measures of college selectivity. *Research in Higher Education*, 6, 1-9.
- Baker, J. A. (1995). Depression and suicide ideation among academically talented adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 39, 218-233.
- Baker, R. W. & Siryk, B. (1986) Exploratory interventions with a scale measuring adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 33(1), 31-38.
- Baker, R. S., McNeil, O. V., & Siryk, B. (1985). Expectation and reality in freshman adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 32(1), 94-103.
- Baker, R., & Siryk, B. (1984). Measuring adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling*

*Psychology, 31(2), 179-189.*

- Bean, J. (1990). *Using Retention Management in Enrollment Management*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Berger, S. L. (1989). *College planning for gifted students*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.
- Berger, J. B. & Milem, J. F. (1999). The role of student involvement and perceptions of integration in a causal model of student persistence. *Research in Higher Education, 40*, 641-664.
- Blatt, S. J. (1995). The destructiveness of perfectionism: Implications for the treatment of depression. *American Psychologist, 50*, 1003-1020.
- Boulter, L. T. (2002). Self-concept as a predictor of college freshman academic adjustment. *College Student Journal, 36(2)*, 234-247.
- Brunsdon, V., Davies, M. S. & Bracken, M. (2000). Why do he students drop out? A test Tinto's model. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 24(3)*, 301-310.
- Buote, V. M., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W., Adams, G., Birnie-Lefcovitch, S., Polivy, J., & Wintre, M. G. (2007). The importance of friends: Friendship and adjustment among 1<sup>st</sup> year university students. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22(6)*, 665-689.
- Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., & Castaneda, M. B. (1993). College persistence: Structural equations modeling test of an integrated model of student retention. *The Journal of Higher Education, 64*, 123-139.
- Chickering, A. W. (1969). *Education and Identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cohen, J. (1992). Quantitative methods in psychology. *Psychological Bulletin, 112(1)*,

155-159. doi: 10.1037//0033-2909.112.1.155

- Cohorn, C. A. and Giuliano, T. A. (1999). Predictors of adjustment and institutional attachment in 1<sup>st</sup> – year college students. *Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 49(2), 47-56.
- Cooper, S. E. & Robinson, D. A. G. (1988, August). Assessing successful adaptation to college. Paper presented at the *American Psychological Association*, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Cross, T. L., Gust-Brey, K., & Ball, P. B. (2002). A psychological autopsy of the suicide of the suicide of an academically gifted student: Researchers' and parents' perspectives. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 46, 247-264.
- Daniel, L. & Digby, J. (2002). Selling people on honors education. *National Honors Report*, 23(1), 1-2.
- Davis, J. A. (1966). The campus as a frog pond: An application of the theory of relative deprivation to career decisions of college men. *American Journal of Sociology*, 72(1), 17-31.
- Digby, J. (2002). *Honors programs & colleges: The official guide of the National Collegiate Honors Council*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Lawrenceville, NJ: Peterson's.
- Duru, E. (2008). The predictive analysis of adjustment difficulties from loneliness, social support, social connectedness. *Educational Sciences: Theory and practice*, 8(3), 849-856.
- Estrada, L., Dupoux, E., & Wolman, C. (2006). The relationship between locus of

control and personal-emotional adjustment and social adjustment to college life in students with and without learning disabilities. *College Student Journal*, 40, 43-54.

Fallows, J. (2003). The new college chaos. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 292(4), 106-114.

Flett, G. L. & Hewitt, P. L. (2002). Perfectionism and maladjustment: An overview of theoretical, definitional, and treatment issues. In G. L. Flett & P. L. Hewitt (Eds.), *Perfectionism: Theory, research, and treatment* (pp. 5-31). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Friedlander, L. J., Reid, G. J., Shupak, N., & Cribbie, R. (2007). Social support, self-esteem, and stress as predictors of adjustment to university among first-year undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3), 259-274.

Geiger, M. & Cooper, A. (1995). Predicting academic performance: The impact of expectancy and needs theory. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 63(3), 251-262.

Gerdes, H., & Mallinckrodt, B. (1994). Emotional, social, and academic adjustment of college students: A longitudinal study of retention. *Journal of Counseling of Development*, 72, 281-287.

Gross, M. U. M. (2004). *Exceptionally gifted children*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

Hamacheck, D. E. (1978). Psychodynamics of normal and neurotic perfectionism. *Psychology*, 15, 27-33.

Hausmann, L. R. M., Feifei, Y., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2009). Sense of belonging and persistence in White and African American first-year students.



*Research in Higher Education*, 50, 649-669.

Hays, R. B. & Oxley, D. (1986). Social network development and functioning during a life transition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 305-313.

Hebert, T. P., and McBee, M. T. (2007). The impact of an undergraduate honors program on gifted university students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51(2), 136-151.

Retrieved from ERIC database: Doi: 10.1177/0016986207299471

Hibbard, D. R. & Davies, K. L. (2011). Perfectionism and psychological adjustment among college students: Does educational context matter? *North American Journal of Psychology*, 13(2), 187-200.

*Honors opportunities*. (n.d.) [Brochure]. Norfolk, VA: Old Dominion University.

Holmbeck, G. N. & Wandrei, M. L. (1993). Individual and relational predictors of adjustment in first-year college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 40, 73-78.

Hoge, R. D. & Renzulli, J. S. (1993). Exploring the link between giftedness and self-concept. *Review of Educational Research*, 63, 449-465.

Jackson, L. M., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W., Hunsberger, B. E. (2000). Great expectations: The relation between expectancies and adjustment during the transition to university. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30, 2100-2125.

Kern, C. W., Fagley, N. S., & Miller, P. M. (1998). Correlates of college retention and gpa: Learning the study strategies, testwiseness, attitudes, and ACT. *Journal of College Counseling*, 1, 26-35.

Kerr, B. A. (1991). *A handbook for counseling the gifted and talented*. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development.

- Keup, J. R. (2007). Great expectations and the ultimate reality check: Voices of students during the transition from high school to college. *NASPA Journal*, 44 (1), 3-31.
- Krotseng, M. V. (1992). Predicting persistence from the student adaptation to college questionnaire: Early warning or siren song? *Research in Higher Education*, 33(1), 99-111.
- Kuh, G. D. (1991, winter). The role of admissions and orientation in creating appropriate expectations for college life. *College & University*, 75-82.
- Lamothe, D., Currie, F., Alisat, S., Sullivan, T., Pratt, M., & Pancer, S. (1995). Impact of a social support intervention on the transition to university. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 14, 167-180.
- Lauterbach, C. G. & Vielhaber, D. P. (1966). Need-press and the expectation-press indices as predictors of college achievement. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 26, 965-972.
- Levitz, R. S., Noel, L. & Richter, B. J. (1999). Strategic moves for retention success. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 108, 31-49.
- LoCicero, K. & Ashby, J. S. (2000). Multidimensional perfectionism and self-reported self-efficacy in college students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 15(2), 47-56.
- Mattanah, J. F., Ayers, J. F., Brand, B. L., & Brooks, L. J. (2010). A social support Intervention to ease the college transition: Exploring main effects and moderators. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(1), 93-108.
- Marsh, H. W. (1987). The big-fish-little-pond effect on academic self-concept. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 79(3), 280-295.

- Marsh, H. W. (1991). The failure of high ability schools to deliver academic benefits: The importance of academic self-concept and educational aspirations. *American Educational Research Journal*, 28, 445-480.
- Marsh, H. W., Chessor, D., Craven, R.G., & Roche, L. (1995). The effects of gifted and talented programs on academic self-concept: The big fish strikes again. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, 285-319.
- Marsh, H. W. & Craven, R. G. (2000, October). The pivotal role of frames of reference in academic self-concept formation: The big fish little pond effect. Paper presented at the *Inaugural Self-Concept Enhancement and Learning Facilitation (SELF) Research Centre International Conference*, Sydney, Australia.
- McGrath, M. M. & Braunstein, A. (1997). The prediction of freshman attrition: An examination of the importance of certain demographic, academic, financial and social factors. *College Student Journal*, 31, 396-408.
- Milgram, R. M., Hong, E. (1999). Multipotential abilities and vocational interests in Gifted adolescents: Fact or fiction? *International Journal of Psychology*, 34(2), 81-93.
- Moos, R. (1976). *The human context: Environmental determination of behavior*. New York, NY: Wiley
- Murtaugh, P., Burns, L., & Schuster, J. (1999). Predicting retention of university students. *Research in Higher Education*, 40, 355-371.
- Neeman, J. & Harter, S. (1986). *Manual for self-perception profile for college students*. Denver: University of Denver.
- Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N. M., & Moon, S. M. (2002). *The social and*

*emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* Waco, TX:

Prufrock Press.

- Ory, J., & Braskamp, L. (1988). Involvement and growth of students in three academic programs . *Research in Higher Education*, 28(2), 116-129.
- Pancer, S. M., Hunsberger, B., Pratt, M. W., & Alisat, S. (2000). Cognitive complexity of expectations and adjustment to university in the first year. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 15(1), 38-57.
- Pantages, T. J. and Creedon, C. F. (1978). Studies of college attrition: 1950-1975. *Review of Educational Research*, 48, 49-101.
- Pask-McCartney, C. & Salomone, P. R. (1988). Difficult cases in career counseling: III-The multipotential client. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 36, 231-240.
- Pflaum, S. W., Pascarella, E. T., & Durby, P. (1985). The effects of honors college participation on academic performance during freshman year. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 26(5), 414-419.
- Pickering, J. W., Calliotte, J. A., & McAuliffe, G. J. (1992). The effect of noncognitive factors on freshman academic performance and retention. *Journal of The Freshman Year Experience*, 4(2), 7-30.
- Pickering, J., Calliotte, J., Macera, A., and Zerwas, S. (n.d.). *Manual for the Transition to College Inventory*. Retrieved from <http://www.odu.edu/ao/universityassessment/tci/pdf/manual05.pdf>
- Pritchard, M. E., Wilson, G. S., & Yamnitz, B. (2007). What predicts adjustment among college students? A longitudinal study. *Journal of American College Health*, 56 (1), 15-21.

- Reis, S. M. & Renzulli, J. S. (2004). Current research on the social and emotional development of gifted and talented students: Good news and future possibilities. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(1), 119-130.
- Renzulli, J. S. (1978). What makes giftedness? Reexamining a definition. *Phi Delta Kappan, 60*, 180-184.
- Rice, K. G., Leever, B. A., Christopher, J., & Porter, J. D. (2006). Perfectionism, stress, and social (dis) connection: Short-term study of hopelessness, depression, and academic adjustment among honors students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(4), 524-534.
- Rice, K. G. & Mirzadeh, S. A. (2000). Perfectionism attachment and adjustment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47*, 238-250.
- Richey, M. H. & Richey, H. W. (1980). The significance of best-friend relationships in adolescence. *Psychology in the Schools, 17*, 536-540.
- Rickinson, B. & Rutherford, D. (1995). Increasing undergraduate student retention rates. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 23*, 161-172.
- Rinn, A. N. (2007). Effects of programmatic selectivity on the academic achievement, academic self-concepts, and aspirations of gifted college students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 51*(3), 232-245.
- Rinn, A. N. (2005). Trends among honors college students: An analysis by year in school. *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education, 4*, 157-167.
- Rinn, A. N. and Plucker, J. A. (2004). We recruit them, but then what? The educational and psychological experiences of academically talented undergraduates. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 48*(1), 54-67.

- Robinson, N. M. (1997). The role of universities and colleges in educating gifted undergraduates. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 72(3), 217-236.
- Ross, P. O. (1993). National excellence: A case for developing America's talent. Washington DC: U.S Office of Education.
- Rossi, P. (1966). *Research strategies in measuring peer group influence*. In Newcomb, T. & Wilson, E. (Eds.). *College peer groups* (pp. 190-214). Chicago: Aldine.
- Rybak, A. & McAndrew, F. T. (2006). How do we decide whom our friends are? Defining levels of friendship in Poland and the United States. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 146, 147-163.
- Rysiew, K. J., Shore, B. M., and Leeb, R. T. (1999). Multipotentiality, giftedness, and career choice: A review. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 77, 423-430.
- Savin-Baden, M. and Major, C. H. (Eds.). (2010). New approaches to qualitative research: Wisdom and uncertainty. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sederberg, P. (2005). Characteristics of the contemporary honors college. A descriptive analysis of a survey of NCHC member colleges. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 6(2), 121-136.
- Seifert, T. A., Pascarella, E. T., Colangelo, N., and Assouline, S. G. (2007). The effects of honors program participation on experiences of good practices and learning objectives. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(1), 57-74.
- Sherer, M. (1985). Depression and suicidal ideation in college students. *Psychological Reports*, 57, 1061-1062.
- Smith, J. S. and Wertlieb, E. C. (2005). Do first-year college students' expectations align with their first-year experiences? *NASPA Journal*, 42(2), 153-174.

Retrieved from

<http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=5&sid=a621c5cf-ac78-4c3f-a1d1-31c33c5cf742%40sessionmgr15>

- Stanley, J. C. (1990). Leta Hollingworth's contribution to above-level testing of the gifted. *Roeper Review*, 12, 166-171.
- Stern, G. G. (1966). Myth and reality in the American college. *AAUP Bulletin*, 52, 408-414.
- Suk Wai Wong, M. & Watkins, D. (2001). Self-esteem and ability grouping: A Hong Kong investigation of the big fish little pond effect. *Educational Psychology*, 21(1), 79-87.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125. doi: 10.3102/00346543045001089
- Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. (2nd ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tokuno, K. A. (1986). The early adult transition and friendships: Mechanisms of support. *Adolescence*, 21, 593-606.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006). College enrollment and work activity of 2005 high school graduates [News release]. Retrieved from [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/hsgec\\_04262007.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/hsgec_04262007.pdf)
- VanPoolen-Larsen, L. (1991). *Gifted education: An overview and critique*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 334727).
- Vialle, W., Heaven, P. C. L., & Ciarrochi, J. (2007). On being gifted, but sad and

misunderstood: Social, emotional, and academic outcomes of gifted student in the Wollongong Youth Study. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 13(6), 569-586.

Vredenburg, K., O'Brien, E., & Kramer, L. (1988). Depression in college students: Personality and experiential factors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 35, 419-425.

Weissberg, N., Owen, D., Jenkins, A., & Harburg, E. (2003). The incremental variance problem: Enhancing the predictability of academic success in an urban, commuter institution. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 129(2), 153-180.

Wirt, J., Choy, S., Rooney, P., Provasnik, S., Sen, A., & Tobin, R. (2004). *The condition of education 2004* (NCES 2004-077). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Zeidner, M. & Schleyer, E. J. (1998). The big-fish-little-pond effect for academic self-concept, test anxiety, and school grade in gifted children. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 24, 305-329.



*Appendix A*

**2010**

**TRANSITION**

**TO**

**COLLEGE**

**INVENTORY**

Developed by

James A. Calliotte, PhD

J. Worth Pickering, EdD

©2005

## TRANSITION TO COLLEGE INVENTORY

## Deciding to Attend College

1. To be able to get a better job
2. To broaden my perspectives
3. To get away from home
4. To be able to make more money
5. To learn more about things which interest me
6. To attain feelings of accomplishment and self-confidence
7. To develop and use my athletic skills
8. To prepare myself for graduate or professional school
9. To participate in college social life
10. To develop interpersonal skills

Selected items on the Transition to College Inventory were adapted or adopted from the Freshman Survey conducted by the Higher Educational Research Institute at UCLA.

Used with permission. (<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/cirpoverview.php>)

## Choosing This College

11. Parents
12. High School counselor or teacher
13. Talking with an admissions representative on campus

14. High school visits by the Admissions Staff
15. This college's students who are friends or acquaintances
16. A faculty member(s) from this college.
17. This college's recruitment publications
18. Open House / campus visitation day
19. This college's good academic reputation
20. I was offered financial aid
21. Cultural diversity
22. This college's good social reputation
23. Availability of my chosen major
24. I was not accepted by my higher choice college(s)
25. This college's attractive location
26. This college's graduates get good jobs
27. Cost of attending this college.
28. Opportunity to work part-time
29. Opportunity to participate in varsity athletics
30. The appearance of the campus
31. Availability of extracurricular activities

#### High School Experiences

32. Studying or doing homework
33. Socializing with friends
34. Talking with teachers outside of class

35. Participating in organized sports
36. Exercising on my own
37. Partying
38. Working for pay
39. Participating in organized clubs and groups
40. Watching TV
41. Playing computer/video games
42. Using the internet
43. Doing hobbies
44. Failed to complete a homework assignment on time
45. Drank alcoholic beverages
46. Had difficulty concentrating on assignments
47. Made careless mistakes on tests
48. Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do
49. Was too bored to study
50. Felt depressed

#### Academic Abilities and Traits

51. General academic ability
52. Mathematical ability
53. Reading comprehension
54. Study skills
55. Time management skills

- 56. Writing ability
- 57. Computer skills

#### Other Abilities and Traits

- 58. Drive to achieve
- 59. Popularity with the opposite sex
- 60. Popularity with the same sex
- 61. Leadership ability
- 62. Physical health
- 63. Self confidence
- 64. Interpersonal communication skills

#### Attitudes About Being a College Student

- 65. It is important to me to be a good student
- 66. I expect to work hard at studying in college
- 67. I am committed to being an active participant in my college studies
- 68. I will be proud to do well academically in college
- 69. I want others to see me as an effective student in college
- 70. I admire people who are good students
- 71. I find learning to be fulfilling
- 72. I will allow sufficient time for studying in college
- 73. I see myself continuing my education in some way throughout my entire life
- 74. I feel really motivated to be successful in my college career

- 75. I don't seem to get going on anything important
- 76. I don't seem to have the drive to get my work done

Items 74 and 75 contributed by Dr. Stephen Robbins, ACT.

[Robbins, S. and Patton, M. (1985). Self-Psychology and Career Development: Construction of the Superiority and Goal Instability Scales. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 32, 221-231.]

#### Predictions About Academic Success

77. Nationally, about 50% of college students typically leave before receiving a degree. If this should happen to you, which of the following do you think would be the MOST LIKELY cause?

- A. I am absolutely certain that I will obtain a degree
- B. To accept a good job
- C. To enter military service
- D. It would cost more than my family could afford
- E. To get married
- F. Disinterested in study
- G. Lack of academic ability
- H. Inefficient reading or other study skills

Above item contributed by Dr. Willian Sedlacek, University of Maryland.

[Sedlacek, W. (2005). Beyond the Big Test: Noncognitive Assessment in Higher Education. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 180).

78. Please check the one description below that you feel best represents your career plans at this time.

A. I have NOT made a career choice at this time and do not feel particularly concerned or worried about it.

B. I have NOT made a career choice and I am concerned about it. I would like to make a decision soon and need some assistance to do so.

C. I have chosen a career and although I have not investigated it or other career alternatives thoroughly, I think I would like it.

D. I have investigated a number of careers and have selected one. I know quite a lot about this career including the kinds of training or education required and the outlook for jobs in the future.

How great are the chances that the following situations will happen to you?

A. Very Good Chance

B. Some Chance

C. No Chance

79. Graduate with honors

80. Miss more than one class per week

81. Develop a good relationship with at least one faculty member or an advisor

82. Earn at least a "B" average

83. Study with other students

84. Fail one or more courses

85. Find my courses boring

- 86. Receive emotional support from my family if I experience problems in college
- 87. Complete a bachelor's degree at this college.
- 88. If needed, seek assistance for personal, career, or academic problems from the appropriate office on campus
- 89. Be placed on academic probation
- 90. Drop out of college temporarily
- 91. Drop out of college permanently
- 92. Transfer to another college at the end of my freshman year
- 93. Transfer to another college sometime in the future
- 94. Return for the fall semester of my sophomore year
- 95. Be satisfied with this college.
- 96. Have serious disagreements with my family regarding my personal, social, academic, or career decisions

#### Predictions About Involvement With This College

During your freshman year, how often do you expect to:

- 97. Use the library as a place to study and do research for your classes?
- 98. Talk with faculty informally outside of class?
- 99. Think about course material outside of class and/or discuss it with other students?
- 100. Participate in cultural events (art, music, theater) on campus?
- 101. Use the student center as a place to eat and/or socialize with friends?
- 102. Use campus athletic facilities for individual or group recreational activities?
- 103. Participate in campus clubs and organizations?



- 104. Read articles or books or have conversations with others on campus that will help you to learn more about yourself?
- 105. Make friends with students who are different from you (age, race, culture, etc.)?
- 106. Have serious discussions with students whose beliefs and opinions are different from yours?
- 107. Use what you learn in classes in your outside life?
- 108. Actively participate in your classes?

How great are the chances that the following situations will happen to you?

A. Very Good Chance                      B. Some Chance                      C. No Chance

- 109. Work full-time while attending college
- 110. Work part-time while attending college
- 111. Do volunteer work
- 112. Establish some close friendships with students I meet during my freshman year
- 113. Be elected an officer in an organization
- 114. Participate in varsity sports
- 115. Feel overwhelmed occasionally by all I have to do

#### Making a College Choice

- 116. When it came to choosing among all of the colleges to which you were accepted, what choice was this institution?
  - A. First choice
  - B. Second choice

- C. Third choice
- D. Lower than third choice

Thank you for your time and effort in completing the  
Transition to College Inventory

Good luck to you during your first year!

## Appendix B

## APPENDIX B OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY APPLICATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH

Note: For research projects regulated by or supported by the Federal Government, submit 10 copies of this application to the Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, submit to your college human subjects committee.

<b>Responsible Project Investigator (RPI)</b>		
The RPI must be a member of ODU faculty or staff who will serve as the project supervisor and be held accountable for all aspects of the project. Students cannot be listed as RPIs.		
First Name: Alan	Middle Initial: M	Last Name: Schwitzer
Telephone: (757) 683-3702	Fax Number:	E-mail: aschwitz@odu.edu
Office Address: Darden College of Education Office #168-6		
City: Norfolk	State: VA	Zip: 23529
Department: Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling		College: Darden College of Education
Complete Title of Research Project: The Expected Adjustment and Academic Outcomes of Honors College Students		Code Name (One word): Adjustment
<b>Investigators</b>		
Individuals who are directly responsible for any of the following: the project's design, implementation, consent process, data collection, and data analysis. If more investigators exist than lines provided, please attach a separate list.		
First Name: Christina	Middle Initial: R	Last Name: Washington
Telephone: (757) 683-5519	Fax Number:	Email: crwashin@odu.edu
Office Address: Student Success Center Rm 2000		
City: Norfolk	State: VA	Zip: 23529
Affiliation: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
First Name:	Middle Initial:	Last Name:
Telephone:	Fax Number:	Email:
Office Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Affiliation: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
List additional investigators on attachment and check here: <input type="checkbox"/>		

## Type of Research

1. This study is being conducted as part of (check all that apply):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Research                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Thesis Graduate Student Research  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Dissertation | <input type="checkbox"/> Honors or Individual Problems Project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masters Thesis                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                           |

## Funding

2. Is this research project externally funded or contracted for by an agency or institution which is independent of the university? Remember, if the project receives ANY federal support, then the project CANNOT be reviewed by a College Committee and MUST be reviewed by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

☐ Yes (If yes, indicate the granting or contracting agency and provide identifying information.)  
☒ No

Agency Name:  
Mailing Address:  
Point of Contact:  
Telephone:

## Research Dates

3a. Date you wish to start research (MM/DD/YY) 7/18/2012  
3b. Date you wish to end research (MM/DD/YY) 08/31/2012

## Human Subjects Review

4. Has this project been reviewed by any other committee (university, governmental, private sector) for the protection of human research participants?

☐ Yes  
☒ No

4a. If yes, is ODU conducting the primary review?

☐ Yes  
☐ No (If no go to 4b)

4b. Who is conducting the primary review?

**5. Attach a description of the following items:**

☒ Description of the Proposed Study

☒ Research Protocol

☐ References

☒ Any Letters, Flyers, Questionnaires, etc. which will be distributed to the study subjects or other study participants

☐ If the research is part of a research proposal submitted for federal, state or external funding, submit a copy of the FULL proposal

Note: The description should be in sufficient detail to allow the Human Subjects Review Committee to determine if the study can be classified as EXEMPT under Federal Regulations 45CFR46.101(b).

**Exemption categories**

**6. Identify which of the 6 federal exemption categories below applies to your research proposal and explain why the proposed research meets the category. Federal law 45 CFR 46.101(b) identifies the following EXEMPT categories. Check all that apply and provide comments.**

SPECIAL NOTE: The exemptions at 45 CFR 46.101(b) do not apply to research involving prisoners, fetuses, pregnant women, or human in vitro fertilization. The exemption at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), for research involving survey or interview procedures or observation of public behavior, does not apply to research with children, except for research involving observations of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.

\_\_\_\_(6.1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

**Comments:**

\_\_\_\_(6.2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; AND (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

**Comments:**

\_\_\_ (6.3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if:

(i) The human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

**Comments:**

  X   (6.4) Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

**Comments:** Inventory data that have been collected previously by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IRA) at ODU and compiled by an IRA staff member will be used for this study. The researcher will not have access to identifying information from the final dataset. Student names and UIN's will be stripped from the final dataset; therefore, the subjects, their responses to the inventory, grade point average, and retention status will remain confidential. Data will only be viewed by the researcher and the IRA staff member who compiles the data.

\_\_\_ (6.5) Does not apply to the university setting; do not use it

\_\_\_ (6.6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Comments:**

**PLEASE NOTE:**

1. You may begin research when the College Committee or Institutional Review Board gives notice of its approval.
2. You **MUST** inform the College Committee or Institutional Review Board of ANY changes in method or procedure that may conceivably alter the exempt status of the project.

**Responsible Project Investigator** (Must be original signature)

Description of Proposed Study:

The purpose of this study will be to (a) examine the differences in expected adjustment between honors students and non-honors students; (b) examine differences in success between honors and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment; and (c) examine differences in the retention status between honors and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment. The factor will be the type of participant (honors versus non-honors), and the dependent variables will be the levels of expected adjustment, first semester success, and retention status. The levels of expected adjustment will be measured using the Transition to College Inventory (TCI). Students receiving a 3.0 or above will be considered academically successful, and students who re-enroll at Old Dominion University (ODU) in the following spring semester will be considered academically adjusted.

The TCI will be used on the basis of considerations of face validity, and the fact that the items align well with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment. This study will utilize a non-experimental ex post facto design in which archival data will be examined between the years of 2007 and 2010. The data was collected through the *Transition to College Inventory*,

Participants in this study will consist of a sample of 200 first year honors students and a sample of 200 non-honors students. All 400 of the students in the sample will have filled out the TCI during the orientation process. Both samples will be anonymous, and no identifying information will be made available. An Honors College staff member will send students' names to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment where all identifying information will be recoded and made unavailable to the researcher. The data collected will consist of whether a student is a member of the Honors College, his or her responses on the TCI as they relate to expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment, the students' GPA, and their retention status from one semester to the next.

Due to the fact that this study is a non-experimental ex post facto design, the potential of harm that could come to participants is minimal. The responses of the

participants will be anonymous, and the researcher will have no access to identifying information. The data will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

### Research Protocol

#### *Title of proposed study*

The Expected adjustment and academic outcomes of Honors College students

#### *Purpose of study, and research questions*

The goal of the proposed study is to examine the differences, if any, that exist between honors students and non-honors students in their expected adjustment to an institution of higher education, and to examine how participation in honors programming affects academic adjustment and success. More specifically, the purpose of this study will be to (a) examine the differences in expected adjustment between honors students and non-honors students; (b) examine differences in success between honors and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment; and (c) examine differences in the retention status between honors and non-honors students based on their levels of expected adjustment.

Three research questions will be addressed in this study. To answer the overarching concern regarding *How do honors students compare with non-honors students in expected adjustment and does expected adjustment and participation in the Honors College predict academic adjustment?* These three research questions are:

**RQ1:** To what extent are there statistically significant differences between honors students and non-honors students' self-reports on expected adjustment?

**RQ2:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict first semester academic success of honors students and non-honors students?

**RQ3:** To what extent does the level of expected adjustment predict the retention status of honors students and non-honors students?

#### *Procedure*

**Research design:** This study will utilize a non-experimental ex post facto design in which archival data will be examined between the years of 2007 and 2010.

**Instrument:** The *Transition to College Inventory*, or TCI has been used at Old Dominion University since 1993 with the specific purpose of identifying students who may be in



danger of experiencing academic difficulty. In the proposed study, the data collected from the TCI will be analyzed to assess expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. While the TCI was developed to assess a student's potential risks for academic difficulty, the items are also consistent with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment. This assessment was selected for this study because it is currently being used at Old Dominion University. The TCI was also selected based on considerations of face validity, and the fact that the items align well with Baker and Siryk's (1984) conceptual model of adjustment.

**Subjects:** Participants in this study will consist of a sample of 1,500 first year students. A priori power analysis was conducted to determine the number of participants needed to lead to statistically significant results. Utilizing a medium effect size of .05 at Power = .80, 128 participants' scores on the TCI were needed (Cohen, 1992). A sample size of 1,500 will guarantee that at least 200 of the TCI scores will be those of students in the Honors College, and 200 will be non-honors students. Both samples will be anonymous, and no identifying information will be made available. An Honors College staff member will send students' names to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment where all identifying information will be recoded and made unavailable to the researcher. The data collected will consist of whether a student is a member of the Honors College, his or her responses on the TCI as they relate to expected academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment, the students' GPA, and their retention status.

**Data collection procedures:** An Honors College staff member will send students' names to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment where all identifying information will be recoded and made unavailable to the researcher. The data collected will consist of whether a student is a member of the Honors College, his or her responses on the TCI, the students' GPA, and their retention status. This information will be given to the researcher by a staff member in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

**How data will be managed:** The data (students' responses on the TCI, status as an Honors College student, GPA, and retention status) will be housed on the IRA's university-secured server. Finding from the data will only be reported in aggregate form. The final dataset will have no identifying information that could be used to link to the subjects, as all names and UIN's will be stripped. Therefore, the subjects, their responses

on the TCI, GPA, and retention status will remain confidential. After data analysis and interpretation, the data will be deleted from IRA's secured server and destroyed by the research no later than December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

**Risks and benefits for participants:** The proposed study is a non-experimental ex post facto design so the potential of harm that could come to participants is minimal. The researcher will have no access to identifying information.

## References

- Baker, R., & Siryk, B. (1984). Measuring adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31*(2), 179-189.
- Baker, R. W. & Siryk, B. (1986). Exploratory interventions with a scale measuring adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33*(1), 31-38.
- Cohen, J. (1992). Quantitative methods in psychology. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*(1), 155-159. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.112.1.155
- Hebert, T. P., and McBee, M. T. (2007). The impact of an undergraduate honors program on gifted university students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 51*(2), 136-151.  
Retrieved from ERIC database: Doi: 10.1177/0016986207299471
- Jackson, L. M., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M.W., & Hunsberger, B. E. (2000). Great expectations: The relation between expectancies and adjustment during the transition to university. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 30*, 2100-2125.
- Rinn, A. N. and Plucker, J. A. (2004). We recruit them, but then what? The educational and psychological experiences of academically talented undergraduates. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 48*(1), 54-67.
- Robinson, N. M. (1997). The role of universities and colleges in educating gifted undergraduates. *Peabody Journal of Education, 72*(3), 217-236.

No.: 11-107

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW NOTIFICATION FORM

TO: **Alan Schwitzer**  
*Responsible Project Investigator*

DATE: **June 21, 2012**  
*IRB Decision Date*

The Expected Adjustment and Academic Outcomes of Honors College Students  
*Name of Project*

Please be informed that your research protocol has received approval by the Institutional Review Board. Your research protocol is:

- ☐ Approved  
☐ Tabled/Disapproved  
☒ Approved, (Exempt) contingent on making the changes below\*

 **June 21, 2012**  
*IRB Chairperson's Signature* *date*

Contact the IRB for clarification of the terms of your research, or if you wish to make ANY change to your research protocol.

The approval is exempt and therefore will not require a Progress report or Close out report be submitted to the Institutional Review Board. Any change in the methodology of the study which alters the risk to human subjects does require a resubmission of the changes in proposal format to the Institutional Review Board. You must report adverse events experienced by subjects to the IRB chair in a timely manner (see university policy).

- 
- \* Approval of your research is CONTINGENT upon the satisfactory completion of the following changes and attestation to those changes by the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board. Research may not begin until after this attestation.

\*Dr. Schwitzer and Christina Washington are required to verify human subject's protection training by submitting their current CITI Human Subjects training certifications. Re-submit the proposal using the exempt format – choosing 6.4 as the category; comments describing the proposal in the comments section.

**Attestation**

As directed by the Institutional Review Board, the Responsible Project Investigator made the above changes. Research may begin.

George C. Mairhofer July 12, 2012  
IRB Chairperson's Signature date

**Christina R. Washington**

4544 Columbus St. #619, Virginia Beach, VA 23462

2000 Student Success Center, Norfolk, VA 23529

Phone: (757) 719-4473

Email: [cwash008@odu.edu](mailto:cwash008@odu.edu)**EDUCATION**

- Current**            **Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision (CACREP Accredited),**  
 Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA   GPA: 3.95  
 Research interests: college student adjustment, high-achieving students.  
 Expected graduation: December, 2012. Dissertation: Chair: Dr. Alan Schwitzer
- May, 2009**            **Master of Education in Counselor Education (CACREP Accredited),**  
 Old Dominion University-Norfolk, VA   GPA: 4.0
- May, 2001**            **Bachelor of Science in Psychology,**  
 The College of William and Mary- Williamsburg, VA

**EXPERIENCE**

- Professional Experience***            **Coordinator of Academic Services and Advising**  
 October 2010 to present            Old Dominion University, Honors College
- Developing and implementing the Alumni and Peer Mentoring Programs
  - Creating training materials for Honors College peer mentors
  - Advising faculty on research opportunities for honors designated courses
  - Evaluating student transcripts, and providing students with information regarding their ongoing completion of requirements
  - Preparing reports for internal and external agencies
  - Creating educational plans for students in academic difficulty
  - Conducting presentations and staffing Honors College information table at university-sponsored recruitment events

- Advising undecided students in selection of majors and courses
  - Counseling students experiencing adjustment difficulties
  - Assisting with prestigious scholarship support
  - Co-facilitator of Academic Enhancement's Think Tank (initiative that sponsors a small number of undergraduate students each semester to actively engage in the resolution of an issue raised by the ODU community)
- September 2009 to  
October 2010
- Assistant to the Dean/Academic Coach**
- Old Dominion University, Honors College
- Evaluating student transcripts, and providing students with information regarding their ongoing completion of requirements
  - Preparing reports for internal and external agencies
  - Providing administrative support for undergraduate research program, contract honors courses, and departmental honors program
  - Conducting presentations and staffing Honors College information table at university-sponsored recruitment events
  - Advising undecided students in selection of majors and courses
  - Created and conducted academic workshops on study skills, time management, and employing interdependence
- September 2008 to  
September 2009
- Graduate Assistant**
- Old Dominion University, Office of the Dean of Education
- Assisted the Associate Dean in duties such as keeping minutes from meetings, distributing information from the associate dean to the rest of the faculty, and data entry
  - Assisted professors in entering rubrics into an information system called Livetext, and taught them how use the system
- October 2005 to  
August 2008
- Teacher**
- Newport News Public Schools
- Supervised and taught second graders at Lee Hall Elementary School
  - Collaborated with other teachers to devise lesson plans that corresponded with SOL objectives
  - Devised individualized assignments for students that were considered at-risk

- Attended staff development to be informed of new teaching tools to enhance student learning

November 2002 to

August 2003

**Teacher (Head Start)**

Office of Human Affairs

- Supervised a classroom of up to twenty students
- Conducted home visits and parent-teacher conferences
- Created individualized lesson plans for each student and kept detailed file folders for each student regarding his/her progress

***University Teaching Experience***

**Guest Lecturer**

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

- COUN 644- Group Counseling and Psychotherapy

***Supervision and Coaching Experience***

**Individual, Site, and Triadic Supervision**, Fall 2010, Spring 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2012

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

- COUN 634 (Coach)- Advanced Counseling and Psychotherapy Techniques

**HONORS AND AWARDS**

Outstanding Master's Student, Old Dominion University, 2009

Old Dominion University Fellowship, \$15,000

**PRESENTATIONS**

Remley, T.P., Shaw-Stateman, S., Runyan, H., & Washington, C. R. (2009, November). Keeping counseling records in Virginia in a responsible and legal manner. Virginia Counselors Association Conference, Williamsburg, VA.

Neale-McFall, C. W., & Washington, C. R. (2010, October). Using the "Big Five" to improve relationships in supervision. Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Conference, Williamsburg, VA.

Hall, S. B., Maalouf, K., J., Neale-McFall, C. W., Shiflett, C. L., & Washington, C. R. (2011, March). Experience is the only teacher: Expanding future counselors' worldviews through



constructivist education. American Counseling Association's National Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Washington, C. R. (2010, November). Integrating the women's ways of knowing model into the advisory relationship. The National Academic Advising Association, Charlottesville, VA.

Neale-McFall, C. W., & Washington, C. R. (2011, October). Multicultural competencies in counseling: Exploring meanings and experiences. Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors Conference, Nashville, TN.

## **CERTIFICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS**

### ***Certifications***

National Certified Counselor (NCC) #254238

2010 National Board of Certified Counselors

### ***Academic Associations***

Chi Sigma Iota- Old Dominion University, 2008-present

### ***Professional Associations***

American Counseling Association, 2010- current

National Academic Advising Association, 2009- current

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), 2010- current

## **UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

Living Learning Community Committee, Old Dominion University, 2011- present

Academic Enhancement Search Committee (Chair), Old Dominion University, 2012

Excellence in Advising Committee, Old Dominion University, 2011-present

## **REFERENCES**

**Dr. Tim Grothaus, Assistant Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, 23529, email: [tgrothau@odu.edu](mailto:tgrothau@odu.edu).**

**Dr. Alan Schwitzer, Full Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, 23529, email: [aschwitz@odu.edu](mailto:aschwitz@odu.edu).**

**Dr. Tisha Paredes, Senior Research Associate, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, 23529, email: [tparedes@odu.edu](mailto:tparedes@odu.edu)**