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The Impact of Participation in a Virginia Community College Orientation Program Course on Student Engagement, Satisfaction, Academic achievement, and Retention

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**THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN A VIRGINIA COMMUNITY
COLLEGE ORIENTATION PROGRAM COURSE ON STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT, SATISFACTION, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AND
RETENTION**

by

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN A VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ORIENTATION PROGRAM COURSE ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, SATISFACTION, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AND RETENTION

Wendy L. Tighe
Old Dominion University, 2008
Director: Dr. Dennis Gregory

Participation in an orientation program course and several student engagement and satisfaction factors have been identified as positively related to desirable student outcomes. This study explored student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention for students based on their enrollment in an orientation course at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Virginia. This study used a cross-sectional, static group comparison secondary data analysis approach to explore four research questions. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data used for this study came from the TCC spring 2005 Community College Student Report (CCSR) this study determined whether or not participation in an orientation course at TCC significantly impacted student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention, and supported or challenged previous empirical evidence on the subject, especially the four-year university and college research abundantly available. The data was factor analyzed and explored using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings yielded significant results in terms of student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention at the community college level. Orientation participants interacted more with faculty and used academic support

services (peer or other tutoring, skill labs, financial aid advising) than students who did not participate in orientation. Students who participated in orientation were significantly more likely to use. Also, students who participated in orientation reported that the institution encouraged them to spend significant amounts of time studying, offered the support services needed for success at this college, encouraged contact with students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds to expand appreciation of their peers, the primary objectives of the course. On the measure for student satisfaction, students appear to get along better with their peers and faculty than they do with the administrative personnel and offices, regardless of participation in orientation.

This study contributed to the gap in the research literature on community college students, particularly concerning participation in orientation. Several recommendations are provided for future research and practice.

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These are my words of encouragement to those who are reading this – we all need each other. When given the opportunity to help someone, we may really be serving as an angel for that person. After what I have learned through my own experience, I would not want to turn down such an opportunity if given the chance to serve as someone's angel. And I believe we can be virtuous in our work as Administrative Angels trusted in Leadership capacities to help our future students. With God's help – ANYTHING is possible! Best wishes to all...☺

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Orientation is one of the most common intervention strategies used by institutions to promote retention and success of new college freshman (Brawer, 1996). Brawer (1996) found that intervening through orientation programming impacted student retention and success rates, regardless of race, sex, age, academic major, entrance examination scores, and employment status. This is especially important because Cohen and Brawer (2003) underscored the lack of control most community colleges have regarding student retention and persistence, stating that the varied reasons many students withdraw from college are often “beyond the college’s control.... retention might be enhanced if actions were taken [early] to integrate the students with the college” (p.62). Cohen and Brawer (2003) elaborated on this element of control and noted that

the ideal orientation program is a sustained and coordinated effort, fully supported by the entire campus community, based on sound concepts of student development and knowledge of how much college environments influence student[s], inclusive of many different resources and interventions, timed and ordered in an organized fashion, evaluated for its effectiveness and influence, and coordinated by a central department or chair (p.206).

Despite the need for student support to combat attrition, community college student retention studies have been extremely neglected (Derby & Smith, 2004). This is particularly true regarding the research available on orientation programs

and student outcomes at community colleges. Derby and Smith (2004) addressed this issue, highlighting the perception that community colleges are often considered a “revolving door.” This revolving door phenomenon has frequently challenged the study of community college student retention and success because of the diverse students attending the community college. With early intervention programming, such as orientation courses, institutions have tried to alert beginning students “to the availability of advising and, more importantly, to the campus services that can help them in making the transition from their life in the community to their life as a [community college] student” (Derby & Smith, 2004, p.63). Therefore, research regarding student participation in a community college orientation course is worthy of exploration.

Fortunately, community colleges have maintained an open door to all who wish to pursue postsecondary education, including those unable to attend more selective 4-year institutions due to financial, academic, and personal constraints (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Increasingly, the primary role of the community college is to “maintain access” for students to develop the skills and knowledge (Banerji, 2004) required for self-sufficiency and financial independence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Thus, these institutions have a “philosophical obligation” to maximize student success through effective success programming, such as orientation (Upcraft & Farnsworth, 1984).

Student success institutional programming increases student engagement and satisfaction through supporting academic and social integration. Several researchers, most notably Astin (1993), Pascarella and Terinzini (1991), and Tinto

(1993), confirm that the more satisfied and engaged (involved) students were with the social and academic aspects of the institution, the more likely they were to achieve academically and remained enrolled. Of all the student success programming currently available to students, orientation and freshman seminars were found most effective in assisting college students (Fidler & Hunter, 1989).

Institutional policies, procedures, programs, and other services also play a critical role in relieving adjustment stress while establishing a firm foundation for higher learning. These institutional efforts (i.e. advising/counseling, tutoring, and student organizations) facilitate opportunities for students to connect to the institution and establish relationships with fellow peers, instructors, and staff members (Robinson et al., 1996). Nearly all of these efforts can be seen on college campuses today because of their positive impact on student engagement, satisfaction, achievement, and retention. Ultimately, the goal with such programming has been to promote student success, and research studies conducted to validate such programming efforts emphasize the need for institutions to “front-load” these services (Colarulli & McDaniel, 1990).

Little research explores the value of student orientation at two-year colleges (Cook, Cully, & Huftalin, 2003). In fact, research exploring orientation course participation in relation to student engagement (CCSSE, 2004) and factors that predict student retention (Green, 1998) is practically nonexistent. According to Kuh, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), a key factor in whether or not a college student experiences student success was “student engagement,” i.e., the extent students take part in educationally effective practices (p.31). Research has,

however, established a positive relationship between orientation course participation and increased student engagement and satisfaction (Tobolowsky, 2005). Without further exploring the complex relationships between student characteristics, orientation participation, and outcomes (student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention), orientation will become a “potpourri of isolated and futile activities” (Upcraft & Farnsworth, 1984).

Following is a brief overview of the literature on orientation programs to prepare students for college and the impact of such efforts on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention in college. A more detailed review of this literature follows in chapter two.

Background on Orientation Programs

Orientation programs have existed within higher education since the early 1880s (Mamrick, 2005) to help new college students “make the transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment to enhance their success in college” (Upcraft & Farnsworth, 1984, p.27). During the last century, the means of assisting incoming postsecondary students, however, changed considerably. Orientation transitional support evolved from remedial “rights of passage” and “massive get-togethers” (Cohen & Jody, 1978; Strumpf, Sharer, & Wawrzynski, 2003) toward extended orientations, interchangeably referred to as “freshman seminars” (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993) or “student success courses” (Hunter, Skipper, & Linder, 2003). The primary goals of such courses and seminars were to (1) help students adjust; (2) promote academic success, retention, and graduation; (3) reduce trial-and-error behavior; (4) cultivate use of helping services; and (5)

reduce costly administrative time (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993; Cohen & Jody, 1978).

Orientation courses have been referred to as “the most frequently researched and empirically well-documented course in the history of American higher education” (Cueso, 1997, p. 3). Researchers disagree, however, as to the effectiveness of these courses. Some research suggests that new college students who do not participate in an orientation perform as well as their peers who do participate (Bolender, 1994; Friedlander, 1995; Keenan & Gabovich, 1995; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989), while other studies yielded mixed results (Buchanan, 1993; Fonte, 1997; Habing, 1999; Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999; Tobolowsky, 2005). The majority of studies, however, indicated that orientation programs promoted student persistence, retention, and graduation, improved academic performance, and increased use of support services (Busby, Gammel, & Jeffcoat, 2002; Folger, Carter, & Chase, 2004; Glass, & Garrett, 1995; Glynn, Sauer, & Miller, 2003; Ryan & Glenn, 2004; Stupka, 1986; Tobolowsky et al., 2005; Willford, Chapman, & Kahrig, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The problem that currently exists is three-fold. First, although previous empirical research has explored the relationship between college student success and specific elements of student engagement and student satisfaction, very few studies have been conducted with community college students. The substantial differences in the institutional values, goals, missions, populations served, and environmental characteristics by the two-year sector and four-year sector suggest

that further exploration in a community college population is necessary (Marti, 2006).

Although much of the previous studies reported positive student outcomes associated with orientation, nearly all had fairly significant design and methodology limitations (Green, 1998). Many studies used pre-experimental and cross sectional designs with a small number of quasi- and true-experimental designs. Very few studies utilized a multivariate or logistical analysis to examine the differential influence of factors associated with student outcomes. As such, inappropriate or no comparison groups, lack of internal and external validity controls, undersized or non-random sampling techniques, lack of significance testing, and vague or undefined constructs all limited the generalizability of the findings. Such limitations resulted in decreased confidence in the conclusions drawn from the research and created a need for further study.

Finally, since orientation courses have become the primary means of assisting student transition into higher education, further investigation of the impact of these courses on community college students is needed. This is uniquely true concerning the examination of student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention, as each of these variables have been significantly linked to participation in an orientation course. Exploring the impact of orientation courses on community college students could identify relationships between student demographic characteristics, engagement levels, satisfaction levels, and academic achievement to predict retention.

Purpose of the Study

This study has two main purposes: (1) to determine the impact of student participation in an orientation course taught at Tidewater Community College (TCC) on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention and (2) to compare the engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention rates of those students who participated in the TCC orientation course with those who have not participated in the TCC orientation course. A secondary purpose is to determine if significant differences exist between the participants and non-participants in the course. Based on previous research, the researcher seeks to establish baseline data for Virginia community college students who participate in orientation courses. While this research study focused on four distinct research questions, the underlying question being addressed was “Do students who participate in community college orientation courses experience similar student outcomes to those that four-year college and university orientation course students’ experience?” In other words, will the findings at a community college support the majority of the empirical research studies on four-year college and university orientation courses? All variables and constructs were measured by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) instrument, the Community College Student Report (CCSR).

Significance of the Study

The American College Testing Program (2005) suggested that our country has “a college readiness crisis,” resulting in increasing interest in student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention. The increasing number of underprepared students makes it critical that community colleges find ways to assist students. Most institutions now offer some form of orientation for

students (Skipper, 2002), and, in the community college, orientation is typically a course offered through online instruction, in a traditional classroom, or as a combination of the two (Tighe, 2006).

College enrollment has been increasing at both two-year and four-year colleges and universities; unfortunately, at least half of the entering students will not receive the promised benefits of a college education and will drop out by the end of the first year (Gardner & Jewler, 2002). This stark reality is particularly true for open-admissions institutions, as preparedness for the rigorous demands of higher education remain difficult for many students (Carnegie Foundation, 1989; Grimes, 1997; Pitts, White, & Harrison, 1999; Sax, 1996). The VCCS expects to have to accommodate almost 40,000 additional in the near future (Virginia's *Systemwide Strategic Plan for Higher Education*, 2002). To do so effectively involves ensuring reduced time to degree through seamless access and assistance for previously underserved populations. The *Dateline 2009* goals apply to this study, as the objectives entail increasing VCCS enrollment through retention initiatives (Dubois, 2005).

Instructors often view undergraduate students as seriously under prepared in terms of basic college survival skills (Sanderson, Phua, & Herda, 2000). In addition to faculty concerns about student preparation for and commitment to obtaining a college education, conflicts about prudent spending of scarce resources and debate over access issues still challenge the community college philosophy of maintaining the “open door” to all who wish to pursue postsecondary education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Exploring the efficacy of orientation classes will help

determine if the orientation now offered and required of all Virginia community college certificate and degree-seeking students is a good practice in undergraduate education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Without documenting the efficacy of this student success programming, orientation could become marginally valued and targeted for budget cuts (Crawford, 1993).

Definition of Terms

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

Attendance- Full-time or part time.

Academic Achievement – The reported cumulative grade point average.

Academic Preparation – Preparation for class activities (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to the students' program).

Cumulative Grade Point Average - (CGPA) self-reported by the student.

CGPA was recoded to make the CGPA'S a continuous scale maintaining following values: A (4.0 – 3.75), A- to B+ (3.74 - 3.25), B (3.24 – 2.75), B- to C+ (2.74 – 2.25), C (2.24 – 1.73), C- or lower (1.74 - .01), do not have a GPA at this school or pass/fail classes only (0).

Engagement – The extent to which students take part in educationally effective practices (Kuh et al., 2006, p.31). Included student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation.

Extracurricular Involvement – Participation in college-sponsored activities (campus publications, student government, intercollegiate/intramural sports, etc.).

First-Generation College Student - A student who reports that neither mother nor father completed at least an associate's degree.

Freshman – A student who has earned 30 or fewer total college credits.

Full-Time Student – A student enrolled for 12 or more credits.

Institutional Support – The efforts the institution makes to support students. These included encouraging students to study and succeed in college, coping assistance for non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.), and encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds, providing support to thrive socially, and adequate financial aid, and promoting the use of computers in academic work.

Orientation – Participation in Student Development College Success Skills (SDV 100), a one credit hour course offered at TCC to provide students with the information, skills, and tools to transition successfully to the college environment. The class meets for a total of 16 contact hours. Although during the summer of 2005 the Virginia System officially changed the course title to College Success Skills and the course prefix from “STD” to “SDV,” the TCC course description remained unchanged. The SDV 100 course description contains the following:

Assists students in transition to colleges. Provides overviews of college policies, procedures, and curricular offerings. Encourages contacts with other students and staff. Assists students toward college success through information regarding effective study habits, career and academic planning, and other college resources available to students. May include English and

math placement testing. Strongly recommended for beginning students.

Required for graduation (VCCS, 2007).

Parental Education – The highest level of education obtained by the students' mother and father (not a high school graduate, high school diploma or GED, some college, but did not complete a degree, associates degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree/1st professional, doctorate degree, or unknown).

Part-Time Student - A student enrolled for 11 or less credits.

Retention – Students' intent to take classes at the institution again with in the next 12 months.

Satisfaction – Student satisfaction was examined for peer, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices relationships, as well as with the overall educational experience. The relationship indicator used a seven-item response scale (Ranging from 1 to 7, with scale anchors as follows: (1) Extremely Poor, (2) Very Poor, (3) Poor, (4) Neutral, (5) Good, (6) Very Good, and (7) Extremely Good. The overall satisfaction of institution indicator evaluated the entire educational experience at this college on a four response scale (Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor).

Sophomore – A student who has earned 31 or more total college credits.

Student-Faculty Interaction - Student-faculty interaction was classified by interaction activities between faculty and students. These included in and out of class questions, correspondence, discussions, feedback, and activities concerning coursework, grades, career plans, class readings/discussions, and performance.

Student Success – A CGPA above 2.0 (C).

Support Services – Academic advising/planning, career counseling, job placement assistance, peer or other tutoring, skill labs (writing, math, etc.), child care, financial aid advising, computer lab, student organizations, transfer credit assistance, and services to students with disabilities.

Student Demographics

Traditional Students: 24 years old and younger.

Non-Traditional Students: 25 years old and older.

Sex: Male or female.

Ethnicity: American Indian or other Native American; Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander; Native Hawaiian; Black or African American, Non-Hispanic; White, Non-Hispanic; Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; and other.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of engagement (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?
2. Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of satisfaction with relationships (peer, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices) and with the institution (overall educational experience) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

3. Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of academic achievement (CGPA) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?
4. Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher rates of retention (intent to take classes at the institution again within the next 12 months) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

Theoretical Framework

Several models and theories form the theoretical framework for orientation courses. Those most frequently cited in the orientation literature include Sanford's (1969) theory of challenge and support, Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure, Bean's Student Attrition Model (1982), and Astin's (1984, 1985, 1993) theory of student involvement. The literature review in chapter two discusses each of these in-depth.

Participants, Methodology, and Design

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, TCC represents the second largest of 23 institutions on 40 campuses that make up the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). TCC annually enrolls more than 35,000 students and was ranked the 37th largest and among the top 50 fastest growing large community colleges in the nation (TCC, 2007). The four-campus college serves the South Hampton Roads region.

To determine how TCC students who participated in an orientation course differ from TCC students who did not participate in an orientation course, the

researcher used results from the Community College Student Report (CCSR) for this study. The CCSR was administered at TCC during the spring semester of 2005. Using a cross-sectional, static group comparison, ex post facto research design, the researcher employed a secondary data analysis methodology. Specifically, this study examined the relationship between TCC student participation in an orientation course and academic achievement, retention, and specific types of student engagement (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation) and satisfaction with the overall educational experience and relationships (peer, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices). The researcher established student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention rates for TCC students who did, and did not, participate in the orientation course.

Given the rapid expansion of available data records from various agencies and professional organizations and research sources and recent technological advances, the accessibility and ease of use of the secondary analysis methodology offers great promise for higher education research (Sales, Lichtenwalter, & Fevola, 2006). Broadly defined, secondary data analysis involves re-analyzing existing data sets collected by another for new purposes. This approach has been delineated as a legitimate research methodology due to its unobtrusive, time sensitive, resource restricted, and inexpensive benefits (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). By utilizing such techniques, this study sought to fill the community college gap in the

research literature on the relationships between participating in orientation and successful student learning outcomes.

The CCSR data obtained from TCC's Office of Institutional Effectiveness included all survey responses for the spring semester of 2005 enrolled TCC students who participated in the CCSR. Multiple tests for reliability and significance were calculated, analyzed, and presented using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 12.0. Test for significance included descriptive (mean, standard deviation, and percentiles) and inferential (t-tests and chi-squares) statistics. The researcher coordinated all data collection and analysis.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations define the boundaries of the research, as determined by the chosen research questions and the selected variables of interest to the researcher. The purpose of this research expanded the understanding between the relationships of a student's orientation course participation and involvement in other educationally effective practices that prior research connected to desired student educational outcomes. This study established student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention data for TCC's students who did, and did not, participate in TCC's orientation course. The student engagement variables included in this study were based on the availability of empirical research to support or challenge the findings in this study.

Equally important were the researcher's assumptions for this study. The researcher assumed that all the measures taken for this study were reliable and valid for the constructs under investigation, based on the validation research

conducted by McClenney and Marti (2006). It was further assumed that the CCSR was properly administered, collected, coded, and analyzed, and that students who participated in this survey responded truthfully and to the best of their ability. As supported by the review of the research literature, the researcher further assumed that there would be significant differences between those students who did not participate and those who did participate in the orientation course. The researcher also recognized that in an effort to establish internal and external validity of the study, the design and research methodology of the proposed research placed parameters on the application and interpretation of the results of the study. As described in the paragraphs to follow, the results of the research study somewhat limit generalizability and utility of findings.

Limitations of the Study

Some general limitations warrant caution when interpreting the findings of this study. The primary limitations of this study relate to the sample and to the student engagement items used in the study. The study focuses on a very specific group of students -- students enrolled during the spring semester of 2005 at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Thus, it must be emphasized that the results of this research study cannot, and should not, be used to generalize about TCC, or about the larger population of VCCS students. The results can, however, be used to assist community college administrators in setting policy and procedures regarding curriculum and orientating community college students, specifically those students who only enroll in courses on-campus,

as the sub-population randomly selected for this study by CCSSE consisted of on-campus students only.

The CCSR was a snapshot in time, and therefore, the description of student characteristics and engagement and satisfaction levels were based on the number and proportions of student subpopulations at the time of the survey. The sample for this study only included students who enrolled in an on-campus TCC courses during the spring semester of 2005. No off-campus (military base and dual credit), lab sections associated with a lecture, distance learning/online, individual instruction, self-paced, independent study, and English as a Second Language, and developmental courses were included in the random sample of courses from which students were selected to participate in this study. Since students who take such courses were not included, and these student populations may have different characteristics and unique experiences, findings cannot be generalized to all community college students or those whom enroll in these types of courses.

The study's findings were also limited to a self-selected student group because participation in orientation was not a requirement of all TCC students. Students were, however, encouraged by advisors to take the orientation course during their first semester of college. Only students who were pursuing an associates degree or certificate were required to take the course as a graduation requirement, thereby limiting the number of students who may have participated. Some students may, however, have taken the course as an elective, even though it was not a requirement in their career studies certificate program. These students may have taken the course because they felt they really needed the course, or

others may have taken the course because it carried one credit hour needed to meet the financial aid requirements for full-time status. Others may have simply taken the course because they met with an advisor who identified the student as a good candidate for the course and encouraged course participation. Other students may have enrolled simply because the course schedule was a good fit during the particular semester the student enrolled in the course. Even so, since TCC did not offer another type of orientation program to students during the spring semester of 2005 other than the course and the CCSR did not have another survey option for orientation participation, the CCSR controlled for this limitation.

Although the official orientation course description and specific course objectives have remained identical over the years at all VCCS institutions, the name of the course varied (Orientation, Student Development Orientation, College Success Skills, Orientation to College Success Skills) throughout the system until the fall of 2005 (Tighe, 2006). At TCC the course was titled "Orientation" until the 2003-2004 catalog year, in which the course title was changed to College Success Skills (the course description remained unchanged). This could present potential limitations to the study if the student was not clear when responding to the survey question. However, the majority of students surveyed during the spring semester of 2005 were most likely to have enrolled in the course while the name of the course contained the word orientation and the course objectives and descriptions remained identical.

Some students may have perceived an advisor meeting as an orientation, while another student may have felt as though completing the registration process was

an orientation program. Some students may not be aware that there was an actual class that was classified as an orientation program or course. Generally, most students know whether or not they have completed an orientation course and the researcher combined students who indicated that they planned to or had not completed the course into one group, thereby, controlling for this limitation.

Essentially, the items used from the CCSR data (i.e. the orientation participation scale) were not previously developed for an exploratory analysis with other student engagement items (i.e. enrollment, attendance, academic achievement, and retention). Had the orientation participation question been developed with such a purpose in mind, the CCSR would have included additional questions about the course may that could alter the results of the study. Even so, meaningful aspects of the community college student experience were captured in light of the relationship it has to participation in an orientation course.

Therefore, due to these various limitations of the study, care should be taken in generalizing the results to other environments. Without additional investigation, any extension of findings to other settings should be made with cautious consideration to differences in institutions, student characteristics, and orientation programs. This study accomplished its goal -- expanding understanding of the relationships between students' orientation course participation and student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention. This study has established data for a VCCC that can be tested in subsequent studies and applied to institutional decision making.

Relation to Community College Leadership

Despite the known positive impact orientation programming has had in the four-year sector, little agreement existed on the specific objectives and timing for orientation (Miller et al., 2002; Nadler & Miller, 1999). These issues point to administrative and organizational differences in opinion and practices. As Rice and Devore (1992) found, such problems may inhibit the full value of orientation, particularly for two-year colleges, because colleges typically do not have policies regarding timing, delivery method, class size, or content. Thus, this study will provide insight, not only for orientation, but also institutional policy and practice.

Conclusions

The purpose of student orientation courses has remained consistent during the last century: (1) to assist college students with the transition into the collegiate environment and (2) to provide increased opportunities for academic and social integration. This effort to promote student engagement and support student success has been well documented throughout the literature, particularly for the four-year sector. The increased concern about educational attainment and student outcomes, coupled with the changing landscape of the student populations served during the last decade makes investigating college student orientation imperative. This is particularly true at the community college level, as research on this segment of higher education is scarce.

Although several researchers documented the positive impact of orientation courses, many previous studies conducted weak designs with methodological limitations (Green, 1998). This research study attempted to address some of those

limitations by establishing differences between the students who have and have not participated in an orientation course. This study employed a secondary data analysis method to assess the impact of participation in a community college orientation course on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention at TCC. This research attempted to bridge the gap between what we know about student engagement and satisfaction and its link to desirable educational outcomes in the 4-year sector as compared with the 2-year sector. These links should expand how these variables predict community college student success.

Determining the student outcomes regarding the participation in community college orientation courses today provided insight, not only for orientation, but also institutional policy and practice, this was especially true since more and more institutions are requiring participation as a graduation requirement, specifically Virginia community colleges (Tighe, 2006). This study contributed to the growing body of research on community college students, orientation, and student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention. This research not only helped with providing a student perspective on their personal experience, but findings from this study also facilitated with determining the overall impact of orientation participation on engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Almost one half of all the students (11.6 million) in the US are educated by 1,202 community colleges, almost 2,000 institutions if all the branch campuses are included (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2007). Many of these students received some form of financial aid (47%), were enrolled part-time (60%), were 29 years old, classified as first-generation college students (39%), and worked full-time (50%) (AACC, 2007). Several of these characteristics were identified as “at-risk” factors to student retention and academic success (Hicks, 2005). In fact, Tinto (1993) recognized that students who possessed some of these characteristics faced a high risk of poor academic performance and withdrawal from college. Thus, developing ways to increase student success and promote retention takes a top priority in education and society today. As Tinto (1993) suggested, intrusive interventions for at-risk students can create powerful academic and retention outcomes for students.

Although the majority of research indicated a positive impact of participating in orientation, analysis failed to link specific institutional practices (i.e. orientation courses) with specific student outcomes (engagement, satisfaction, and academic achievement), particularly at the community college level. To provide the context and illustrate the need for this study, this chapter summarizes the research available on orientation, the theoretical models and foundation of such programming, the research variables typically studied, and the college student outcomes associated with participation in orientation. This review also examined

student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention and their relationship to college student orientation. A summary of research outcomes were provided to frame the research in this study.

Attrition and Retention in Higher Education

Not surprisingly, administrators at higher education institutions want to retain the students who enter the institution's doors. Increased accountability, decreased financial support, and higher public expectations have triggered great concern about postsecondary student attrition and retention (Grimes & David, 1999).

This phenomenon of attrition has existed for many years. The literature is replete with studies identifying the first year of college as the most critical time for students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Derby & Smith, 2004; Gardner & Jewler, 2002; Glass & Garrett, 1995). Cohen and Brawer (2003), in fact, noted that the first-semester for new community college students was vital to academic progress and continued enrollment.

To determine what happens to the nearly 60% of beginning students in higher education who leave their primary institution without completing a program or degree, the National Center for Postsecondary Statistics (2003b) tracked student cohorts who began their studies in 1989-1990 longitudinally for 5 years. The results from this survey indicated that approximately 50% of the students who withdrew transferred to another institution. Derby and Smith (2004) classified the remaining 50% of students who withdrew as drop-outs (permanent) or stop-outs (take short term hiatus with intention to re-enroll at a later time). These alarming

statistics have motivated postsecondary institutions to exercise the control towards efforts to retain these students; many of these students “drop out of college without giving themselves an adequate chance to adjust” (Robinson, Burns, & Gaw, 1996, p. 55).

Recently, attention has shifted from focusing on student withdrawal rates and attrition to student retention and success. This change in focus implies that institutions do have an element of control in keeping the students that they serve. Ultimately, being able to accurately predict which students are likely to experience academic, personal, and social difficulties, or leave college before they graduate would allow educational administrators to design and implement interventions to help students earn satisfactory grades and persist until graduation (Hicks, 2005). Having a reliable and appropriate tool for assessing institutional quality as it pertains to the student learning experience (CCSSE, 2006a) has enabled campus communities to use the survey feedback to identify and implement needed changes in policy and practice.

Evolution of Orientation

Orientation courses and seminars date back to the early 1880s (Mamrick, 2005), when several institutions, such as Vassar College and Cornell University, began to provide for the transitional needs of new students (Stahl & King, 2000). In 1882, these courses were instituted at Lee College in Kentucky (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996), followed by Boston University and Iowa State University a few years later (Gardner, 1986). These institutions recognized the need to provide special guidance, direction, and support to college freshman and developed

courses to meet such needs. Because of the all-inclusive approach of these course objectives and the presumed usefulness to new students, other postsecondary institutions followed these early leaders. By 1928, orientation courses had mushroomed to well over 100 offerings throughout the United States (Fitts & Swift, 1928; Schnell & Doetkott, 2003).

During the 1970s, increased student attrition and “the influx of diverse groups of students whose needs were not being met by existing, piecemeal orientation initiatives” (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993, p.142) demanded attention. The student development component of remedial orientation courses needed expansion (see Appendix A) to include campus information (policies, governance, resources, services), skills (study, note-taking, textbook-reading and test-taking techniques, time management), and attitude (active learning, goal setting, and career choice). The expanded freshman orientation course offered during this era occasionally included topics on sexuality, financial matters, drugs and alcohol, relationships, wellness, and learning styles (Gardner & Jewler, 2002; Robinson et al., 1996; Skipper, 2002; Schnell & Doetkott, 2003).

According to Upcraft and Farnsworth (1984), considerable focus on orientation programs in higher education has involved assisting new students with the transition “from their previous environment to the collegiate environment to enhance their success in college” (p.27). Throughout the history of college student transitional assistance programming, orientation has been offered at different times and in different program formats. Some of these formats included early activities prior to classes starting, registration and prematriculation (pre-fall or summer),

seminars (study courses), workshops, and year-long or ongoing combined designs (Robinson et al., 1996). More recently, college student orientation programming has expanded to include the online instructional delivery format (Tighe, 2006; Tobolowsky, 2005).

Ryan and Glenn (2004) noted that the types of transition orientation programs have also varied, with focus on learning strategies (active approaches) and academic socialization (norms, values, and rituals of academia). Learning strategy orientation programs have included instruction on college survival and study skills to strengthen student awareness, aptitude, and ability, while academic socialization orientation models have included efforts to promote full integration into the campus culture and community. This campus culture and community integration typically took the form of learning more about the institution, building peer support and group community, accessing and using campus support services, and exploring personal development in the areas of financial responsibility, sexual awareness, values clarification, and diversity appreciation.

Before orientation of college students became “transitional programming,” faculty helped students adjust to college by providing socialization opportunities through “rights of passage” and “massive get-togethers” (Cohen & Jody, 1978; Strumpf et al., 2003). More recently, orientation programming began to include extended orientation courses, also referred to as “freshman seminars” (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993) or “student success courses” (Hunter et al., 2003). The courses did not intend to replace the former pre-matriculation or “first week” orientation programs, but rather were developed to maximize those early non-credit

experiences by attending to students needs (as they surfaced) throughout the first semester.

Today, many institutions offer hybrids or variations on these freshman seminars (Mamrick, 2005). The most prevalent first-year orientation seminars on college campuses vary significantly from one institution to another (Barefoot, 1992), but have been typically classified as one of the following types:

1. *Extended Orientation Seminar*. Sometimes called a freshman orientation, college survival, college transition, or student success course. Content likely will include introduction to campus resources, time management, academic and career planning, learning strategies, and an introduction to student development issues.
2. *Academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections*. May be an interdisciplinary or theme-orientated course, sometimes part of general education requirement. Primary focus is on academic theme/discipline but will often include academic skills components such as critical thinking and expository writing.
3. *Academic seminars on various topics*. Similar to previously mentioned academic seminar except that specific topics vary from each section.
4. *Pre-professional or discipline-linked seminar*. Designed to prepare students for the demands of the major/discipline and the profession. Generally taught within professional schools or specific disciplines.

5. *Basic study skill seminars*. Offered for academically under prepared students. The focus is on basic academic skills such as grammar, note taking, and reading texts (Mamrick, 2005, p.16).

Thus, orientation evolved into a variety of institutional efforts to assist incoming students with the transition to their new environment.

While the above mentioned names for these courses and seminars basically remained the same since they were first studied by Barefoot (1992), the following classifiers are used interchangeably throughout this study: “first-year experience course,” “freshman orientation,” “first-year orientation,” “extended-orientation seminar,” “extended orientation course,” “college success skills,” “freshman seminar,” “orientation course,” “freshman orientation seminar,” “freshman year seminar,” “freshman orientation seminar course,” “freshman seminar course” and “freshman-year experience course.” All of these expressions describe the institutional effort to help integrate students to the institution and college life, typically through a course or seminar. Virginia community colleges utilize *Extended Orientation Seminars* most frequently to promote student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention (Tighe, 2006).

The Curriculum

With the expanded orientation curricula, researchers began to study the goals of student orientation and the outcomes related to student participation. Howard and Jones (2000) found that such courses improved new college students’ critical thinking skills, writing ability, knowledge, and experiences. These course goals were established so that students would improve their scholastic success and

develop realistic personal, academic, and vocational life planning goals: “Rather than being a course for the ‘under-prepared,’ there was a pervasive positive impact of the course, regardless of prior preparation” (p.512).

Robinson and others (1996) also examined freshman seminar orientation course goals from a student learning perspective. These researchers highlighted the information needed, opportunities provided, and support made available to assist entering students. Throughout this review, the researchers presented the variety of orientation programs available to assist students with the transition to higher education and emphasized the institutional need to use comprehensive assessment to tailor orientation programs to student needs. Such assessment of student needs helped Howard and Jones (2000) find that orientation courses can teach students how to be successful in college by providing accurate information and ample support, while promoting an increased sense of security. These researchers found that the orientation course participants gained in areas such as self-confidence, preparedness, knowledge and awareness of campus resources, and improved study skill effectiveness.

Other researchers have also explored the major goals of orientation programming. Busby et al., (2002) noted that orientation programs broadly educate new students about campus opportunities and college life. This instruction exposed students to student services and organizations, campus procedures and administrative regulations, and a variety of college faculty and staff, as well as educational opportunities to promote full integration into the campus culture. More recently, Mamrick (2005) reported that such orientation programming offered in

the form of orientation courses included three primary goals: (a) develop essential academic skills, (b) provide orientation to campus, and (c) ease transition to campus (p.17). As described, these goals are accomplished through course topics such as study skills, time management, campus resources, academic planning, career exploration, critical thinking, college policies, relationship issues, diversity issues, writing skills, and other specific disciplinary topics, which have remained fairly consistent since 1988.

To organize the student orientation goals and present these various course topics, many orientation courses utilize textbooks. Tighe (2006) found community college orientation course faculty used inventories (learning, study strategies, and/or career) with the primary text cited, *Becoming a Master Student* (Ellis, 2002). Orientation faculty reported that information on effective study habits, career and academic planning, and other available college resources were paramount to assisting students toward college success, and the topics most often cited in the online course were campus resources, taking notes, time management, reading, memory, and taking tests. Other topics noted were goal setting, transfer, listening, relationships, thinking, relationships, and decision making. Personal development was referred to regarding finances, sexuality, drugs, and alcohol, yet many of these were not mentioned consistently as topics taught in courses throughout the literature (Tighe, 2006).

All of the college survival and transitional topics included in orientation courses and noted above were found to encourage student confidence and enhance intellectual competence (Cohen & Jody, 1978). While foundationally focused on

the development of academic skills and survival (Skipper, 2002, p. 16), these transitional orientation courses provided the strategy-based socialization required for students to remain enrolled and succeed in college. Ryan and Glen (2004) further noted that this convergence of learning strategy and socialization models has “cross-fertilized” into what are now identified as extended orientation seminars (Mamrick, 2005).

Thus, the orientation course curriculum became focused on academic and social adjustment and integration, with emphasis on familiarization with institutional facilities, programs, and services (Upcraft & Farnsworth, 1984). The course throughout the 1900s became very similar to what can be seen today in orientation course descriptions and objectives, in fact they have remained unchanged in Virginia (Tighe, 2006). This focus on the combined academic and social adjustment curriculum expanded the course and shifted attention to student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention (student success).

In summary, the evolution of college orientation programs has advanced over the years as more discoveries were made and shared through focused research. Curriculum broadened to include strategies, policies, and practices to equip students with the tools they needed to experience academic and personal success, as well as integrate effectively into their new environment. While the formats, timings, and classifiers varied widely across the research literature, the fundamental purpose of college student orientation has remained unchanged -- to assist new college students with the transition to the collegiate environment through academic, social, and personal integration (Robinson et al., 1996).

Impact of Orientation Courses and Seminars on Students

With this shift in focus to student success, an explosion of research appeared. What began as an educational experiment to enhance the freshman year experience for college students in 1972 at the University of South Carolina, the University 101 course, became a wholesale movement in assisting students with the transition to higher education (Strumpf & Hunt, 1993). Since Gardner's work with the University 101 course, the numbers of orientation course offerings and student enrollments have steadily increased every year (Mamrick, 2005). In fact, the orientation course became the most frequently studied course in American higher education (Cueso, 1997).

The freshman orientation seminar was found most effective in assisting new college students (Fidler & Hunter, 1989) because it approached student learning from three theoretical dimensions: transition processes, academic integration, and personal and social integration (Robinson et al., 1996). The transition process provided students with information to relieve college adjustment stress and establish a firm foundation for higher learning. The academic integration dimension introduced students to the campus academic community, programs, services, policies, and procedures. These integrative processes heightened the college experience by drawing on advising, placement testing, registration, and informational components (student conduct, time and study commitments needed for academic success). The personal and social integration dimension entailed building campus community through social networking and community-building activities such as encouraging and showcasing co-curricular

involvement, facilitating group and faculty-staff interaction, mentoring, and learning communities (Robinson et al., 1996).

These theoretical dimensions yield mixed findings regarding the outcomes of student orientation. Most of the research literature revealed that participation in orientation positively impacts student persistence, satisfaction, retention, and graduation, improved performance, and increased use of support services (see Appendix B & C). A limited number of studies found that student participation in orientation had no significant impact on students (Bolender, 1994; Friedlander, 1995; Hazard, 2005; Keenan & Gabovich, 1995; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989), while other studies yielded mixed results (Buchanan, 1993; Fonte, 1997; Habing, 1999; Tobolowsky et al., 2005; Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999).

With the three theoretical dimensions of transitional processes and academic, personal, and social integration (Robinson et al., 1996) and the majority of research indicating the positive impact of orientation, most institutions began offering the orientation course for college credit. In 1911, the first credit orientation course was offered at Reed College in Portland, Oregon (Gardner, 1986). Gardner described this course as follows:

the men and women were taught separately for two hours a week during the entire freshman year.... [and the curriculum contained] the development of higher education, the purpose of college, the college curriculum, individual plan of study, the thought factors of study, and a variety of other topics relating to college life including health, college

spirit, student government, intercollegiate activities, fraternities and sororities and college religion (p. 268).

According to Mamrick (2005), 69.2% of colleges and universities now require the course for all new students, with most two-year institutions (79.8%) using extended orientation.

Although orientation studies were numerous and outcomes varied, this review of the literature focused on the most prevalent features found across the research findings. Overall, the majority of studies confirmed that the orientation course (1) improves student academic performance, (2) increases student retention, and (3) promotes student persistence to graduation (Cuseo, 1991). Missing from this research, however, is empirical research demonstrating the value of new student orientation at two-year colleges (Cook et al., 2003).

Cook and Sterns (1993) noted that while “philosophically, orientation programs at two-year and four-year institutions differ very little” (p. 112), orientation at two-year institutions has been to a large extent a quite different process than what has been seen at four-year institutions. In fact, Rice and Devore (1992) found that two- and four-year institutions differed significantly regarding (1) how these courses are delivered to students, (2) who teaches them, (3) the course content, (4) the class size, (5) whether it was a requirement for all new students or for graduation, (6) the incentives for taking the course (grade and credit), and (7) the overall purpose of the course. The speculation that the orientation programs differ very little was based on the assumption that the student populations at two-year institutions tend to be different from those attending four-

year colleges and universities, and therefore, the students at two-year colleges require different transitional assistance (Cook & Sterns, 1993). Interestingly, no empirical research was found to support this claim, and this study does not propose to establish such a difference. Rather, this study determines the impact of participation in an orientation course on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention for community college students to determine if the findings for community college students are consistent with those for students at four-year institutions. Without further exploring the complex relationships between student characteristics, orientation participation, and outcomes (student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention), orientation will become a “potpourri of isolated and futile activities” (Upcraft & Farnsworth, 1984).

Theoretical Foundation

Most research on college orientation focuses on student transition processes, academic integration, and personal and social integration (Robinson et al., 1996). While there are several theoretical models to study undergraduate students, three fundamental ideas comprise the framework for college orientation freshman seminars. This framework was noted as “a felt sense of community, increased quantity and quality of student involvement in the life of the institution, and social and academic integration” (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993, p. 143). The majority of freshman courses offered to students were intended to concentrate on one or more of these concepts.

According to Barefoot and Gardner (1993), “many freshman orientation seminars were initiated before the emergence of substantive student development research and therefore, without an intentional theoretical framework” (p. 143). Many outcomes research studies now validated the freshman orientation efforts across the nation and many of those previously cited used theoretical models to structure the work. In fact, the work of scholars and theorists such as Sanford’s Challenge and Support (1969), Astin’s Theory of Involvement (1977, 1984, 1993), Tinto’s Student Integration Model (SIM) (1975), and Bean’s Student Attrition Model (1982) were the most frequently cited throughout the research literature as providing valuable frameworks for freshman orientation (Glynn et al., 2003), including the orientation courses, both extended and otherwise.

Challenge and Support

Nevitt Sanford (1969) was one of the pioneer student development theorists in higher education who noted the importance of assisting the “whole student,” not merely addressing students’ intellectual needs. He was primarily recognized for his concept of challenge and support and argued the importance of institutional “community.” Sanford set-the-stage for Astin (involvement), Tinto (integration), and Kuh (engagement); all of these concepts require student and institutional and/or faculty participation. Previously, the faculty challenged the students, and the student affairs personnel provided the required support. Sanford suggested that in order for students to develop while in college, the institutional environment should proactively and proportionally balance the amount of challenge and support presented to students.

If a challenge facing a student was high (as with the transition to the new environment), then the amount of available support (i.e. orientation) should also be high. Sanford realized the significant roles for and between academic faculty and student affairs professionals. His holistic approach to student development called for creating a unified institutional culture, whereby faculty and student affairs *both* challenged and supported students. In the orientation course, students are both challenged and supported by the curriculum and activities (see Appendix B).

Involvement

The connection between student involvement, student success, and retention was primarily documented by Alexander Astin. In 1970 Astin proposed one of the initial college impact models, which hypothesized that educational outcomes result from interactions between inputs, processes, and outputs. Astin's (1977) longitudinal study found that virtually every student persistence factor (outputs) significantly and positively related to the concept of student involvement (processes). Basically, "every positive factor is one that is likely to increase student involvement in the undergraduate experience, while every negative factor is one that is likely to reduce involvement" (p. 145).

Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) drew attention to the extent and quality of a student's integration and investment in the college experience. In defining the concept of involvement, Astin noted quite simply,

student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to

studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students (p. 297).

More recently, Astin (1993) elaborated on his theory and the impact college can have on students. According to Astin (1993), the two critical aspects of student involvement were “(1) the extent to which the student interacts with student peers and (2) the extent to which students interact with faculty” (p. 425). Freshman orientation seminars provided group identification and a chance for intense involvement with the increased academic experience, opportunities for interacting with fellow peers and the faculty, while simultaneously facilitating a new student’s adjustment to college.

Social and Academic Integration

The importance of student social and academic integration into postsecondary education was the fundamental implication of Vincent Tinto's (1993) research on student retention. Building on Tinto’s Student Integration Model (1975), a student’s decision to remain enrolled was found contingent on how integrated he or she was to the institution, both academically and socially. Tinto (1987) suggested that student success typically “hinges on the construction of educational communities in college, program, and classroom level which integrate students into the ongoing social and intellectual life of the institution” (p. 188). Tinto (1988) argued that the importance of student academic and social integration into college life was essential, stating that “institutions must be sensitive to the separation and transitional difficulties new students face” (p. 451).

According to Tinto (1988), students typically advance through challenging stages during their first year of college: (1) Separation (contacts with former group members decrease); (2) Transition (time when new student begins to interact with new group members and to discover the information and skills required to effectively function in the new situation); and (3) Incorporation (sometimes evident from specific ceremonies or rituals confirming connection to the new group). However, "having given up the norms and beliefs of past associations and not yet having adopted those appropriate to membership in a new community, the individual is left in a state of at least temporary anomie," feeling 'normless' and out-of-sorts (pp. 442-443). It is during these phases when significant interaction, primarily between students and peers and students and faculty, were expected to promote academic and social integration.

In 1993 Tinto revised his theory of student departure and integration, noting that institutions do have some control over increasing student retention, especially regarding the importance of the classroom experience. Essentially, Tinto maintained that student retention and success rests with institutional commitment to quality instruction, the policies surrounding student programs, and the building of a strong sense of inclusive educational and social campus community. The more satisfied the student is with these institutional efforts, the more likely the student is to remain enrolled.

The work of Bean (1982) which emphasized the importance of college outreach programs designed to inform students about the available campus support programs and services also supported Tinto's theory of integration. Bean's (1981)

original study of university freshman attrition reported that the dropout process (student cessation of enrollment in an institution) contained 23 independent variables. In 1982, Bean reduced these to 10 variables: (1) intent to leave, (2) practical value of the degree, (3) certainty of choice, (4) institutional loyalty, (5) grade point averages, (6) course content, (7) educational goals, (8) major and job certainty, (9) opportunity, and (10) family approval. Bean hypothesized that the students' organizational, personal, and environmental variables influenced their attitudinal variables (loyalty, certainty, and practical value). Bean suggested that these 10 variables accounted for 50.3% of the variance in student dropout, with student intent to leave the strongest influence. While Bean accounted for student level of confidence (high and low) and sex, he found that grades, transfer opportunity, practical value, and loyalty were the most significantly related to a student's decision to leave the institution. Thus, student orientation courses were expected to provide the needed outreach and support to assist new students with academic and social integration, while at the same time addressing the students' personal needs. Both of these expectations imply that the institution possesses a level of control in whether or not students drop out.

The above theories focused on, and were developed from, researching "traditional" college students, typically enrolled in residential colleges and universities. Community college students were not really addressed in these theories, and some research suggests that traditional theories developed in the university context are not well suited for retention studies in community colleges because

1. Demographic and socio-economic factors relating to community college students are somewhat different from those relating to students attending four-year colleges, and
2. external factors, particularly those related to community forces in the immediate geographical environment of the college's service region area [impact retention] (Mohammad, 1996, p. 1).

Nevertheless, very few theories or models have been found specific to the community college setting or student population (Derby & Smith, 2004). This may not be because the theories are not applicable to community college students, but more because of the lack of empirical research utilizing these theories to study community college students (McClenney & Marti, 2006).

Wild and Ebbers (2002) have called for new research initiatives directly targeting community colleges. They further noted that because community college students are not university students, the methods employed to measure their retention rates are not equal. To address this, these researchers suggested that community colleges must first understand the institutional (or course) mission and the students they serve by identifying "criteria for tracking student retention, including definitions and establishing appropriate baseline data" (p.513). Since very limited research exists for community college students and no baseline data exists for Virginia community college students, particularly related to orientation initiatives (Tighe, 2006), this study hopes to fill the gap in the research literature and establish the community college student data Wild and Ebbers addressed.

In summary, the established and accepted theoretical models as previously presented, regardless of their alleged deficiency in the community college setting (Derby & Smith, 2004; Mohammadi, 1996), were used for this study. The empirical evidence in research using community college samples has been inadequate (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005), and it is the researcher's intention to begin to establish the appropriate community college student baseline data needed (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Most studies validating the orientation course have used the theoretical concepts of challenge and support (Sanford, 1969), involvement (Astin, 1993), integration (Tinto, 1975), and retention (Bean, 1982) to compose the work. Each of these concepts provided a framework for student engagement and freshman orientation efforts (Glynn et al., 2003), and each collectively encompasses the purpose of orientation courses, while simultaneously attempting to explain student behavior, experiences, and outcomes. This study's findings may prove useful in establishing the groundwork for developing a community college retention model in the future. Discovering the empirically-based orientation course participation, engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention confirms for community colleges what we already knew about these variables in the 4-year sector and adds the community college literature.

Using Secondary Data

Given the rapid expansion of available data records, the secondary analysis methodology has offered great promise for higher education research (Sales et al., 2006). Essentially, "secondary analysis" or "secondary data analysis" involves re-

analyzing existing data sets previously collected by another for a new purpose. Several researchers have employed the use of secondary data analysis to research the impact of participation in an orientation course (see Appendix B).

Secondary analysis has included extracting student demographic and academic information from existing computerized student records (Busby et al., 2002; Lipski & Ender, 1990; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Mohammadi, 1994; Stupka, 1986), surveys (Daddona & Cooper, 2002; Glynn et al., 2003; Korn, 2005), or the combination of the two (Folger et al., 2004; McGrath & Braunstein, 1997; Miller et al., 2002). Due to several benefits, secondary analysis has increased and been encouraged, noted as a valid methodology (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). This method may also identify problems needing further exploration (Brosnan et al., 2002). As Sales and others (2006) affirmed,

Secondary analysis has been recognized as a method for examining research questions for more than a century...Research data have always held the potential for later revisits. The more ambitious the study and the better the quality of the database-the greater the potential for further exploration (p. 543).

Orientation Courses and Student Outcomes

According to Pascarella (1986), variable selection for research studies should be based on theory. As previously presented in the theoretical framework, the subsequent research review focuses on the variables relevant to the current study. Those variables most commonly cited in the research literature related to

student outcomes with orientation courses were student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention, which follow based on the findings.

Appendices B and C provide charts describing the multiple research studies and simplify the breakdown of each examined variable covered in the following sub-sections. The first chart (see Appendix B) summarizes the various research literature findings, indicating the impact of the course on academic achievement, retention, and persistence. Several of these studies demonstrate significant differences between students who participate in an orientation course and students who do not participate with regards to GPA, credit hours attempted/earned, and retention found. The second chart (see Appendix C) summarizes the various literature findings, indicating the impact of the orientation course on various student engagement factors (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, academic preparation, and satisfaction with the campus and institutional relationships (peer, faculty, and staff)). As illustrated, several researchers found significant differences between students who participate in an orientation course and students who did not participate with regards to student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, academic preparation, and satisfaction with the campus and institutional relationships (peer, faculty, and staff). Each of the sub-sections that follow provides an in-depth review of the research findings associated with student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention.

Student Engagement and Satisfaction

In an effort to improve undergraduate teaching and learning, a group of postsecondary education scholars developed seven principles for good practice from their knowledge of the past 50 years of research. The *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) were formulated from these researchers' conclusions and included the following values:

1. encourage contacts between students and faculty,
2. develop reciprocity and cooperation among students,
3. encourage active learning,
4. give prompt feedback,
5. emphasize time on task,
6. communicate high expectations, and
7. respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Overall, these principles directly influence student learning and the quality of the collegiate experience. Quite simply, the more students engaged in these kinds of principled learning activities, that is, the higher their time investment and level of effort, “the more they learn and the more likely they are to persist and graduate from college” (Kuh, et al., 2006, p. 31). As reviewed in Kuh, Bridges, and Hayek’s (2006) research, these positive relationships between student engagement and desired student outcomes of college were well documented.

College orientation is one of the current community college institutional efforts to support the *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). In support of “good practice,” research

confirmed participation in an orientation course positively impacted student-faculty interaction (Mastio & Tammi, 1991), the use of support services (Anderson, 2005), institutional support (Blowers, 2005), extracurricular involvement (Sidle & McReynolds, 1999), and academic preparation (Brawer, 1996). Researchers have also confirmed the positive impact of participation in an orientation course in increasing student engagement and satisfaction levels (Tobolowsky, 2005). Overall, those who participated in an orientation course reported that the course improved/greatly improved, the student's adjustment to college life, interactions with faculty, confidence that they would succeed in college, and opportunity to meet other students (Meuler, 2005). Jackson (2005) found that the most valuable aspects of the orientation course included (a) having opportunities for interaction with other students; (b) having regular contact with advisors and faculty members; (c) learning to meet the demands of college; and (d) gaining an understanding of available campus resources.

Other researchers examined students' satisfaction with the campus and institutional relationships (peer, faculty, and staff) as the result of participating in an orientation course. Stieha (2005) concluded that the impact of the extended orientation "resonates beyond the first college year" and that a positive correlation existed between student satisfaction and enrollment in the extended orientation course. Hopmeyer-Gorman and Newhall (2005) and Edge (2005) found that students reported a greater sense of connection to community through peer friendships and socializing with peers from class and that the first-year seminar impacted student social engagement (specifically with peers) and academic

achievement positively. Blowers (2005) found that commuting first-year participants reported that they were more likely to experience more positive relationships with faculty, participate more in weekly co-curricular activities, and feel that the university was supporting them socially more than students who did not participate in the seminar. First-year seminar residential students reported that they were more likely to come to class prepared, felt the University provided them with academic and social support, and were more likely to have discussed career plans with faculty (Blowers, 2005). These findings appear directly related to Tinto's (1993) research on academic and social integration and illustrated that the goals of the orientation course were being met.

Nevertheless, "student engagement is not likely to occur by accident. Engagement, therefore, must be intentional. It must happen by design" (CCSSE, 2004, p.2). The responsibility dwells with the institution to provide such design and help college students overcome the multitude of circumstances that challenge success and persistence. Orientation has been one means to actively engage students, increase student satisfaction, and promote academic achievement and retention. To investigate such institutional design and determine student participation in educationally good practices, the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE, 2007a), was developed in 1999. The NSSE, directed by George Kuh and headquartered at Indiana University in the Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning, seeks to determine how four-year college and university undergraduates spend time and what they gain from attending college. The instrument used to investigate these student behaviors and outcomes,

the *College Student Report* (CSR), measures student engagement. Nationwide, since its inception, over 1100 colleges and universities have participated in the NSSE on an annual basis, because the CSR represents empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education (NSSE, 2007b). The survey items on the CSR instrument reflect identified behaviors associated with desired outcomes.

A related project, working in partnership with NSSE, the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement* (CCSSE), was established in 2001 as a project of the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin (CCSSE, 2006a). This project expanded out of the need to assess community college education quality and to determine the specific behaviors of community college students and their respective institutions that contribute to desirable learning outcomes. With permission from Indiana University, the CCSSE instrument, the *Community College Student Report* (CCSR), was adapted from the NSSE *College Student Report* (CSR) instrument, to measure community college student engagement (CCSSE, 2006c).

The CCSSE, captures the experiences and activities of community college students, has aided in filling the gap in the research literature between what we know about the study of student engagement and its relationship to desirable educational outcomes between four-year college students and those that attend two-year institutions. Information obtained from the CCSR was expected to be used as a means for improving instruction and scholarship by evaluating the degree to which students are engaging in good educational practices at community and technical colleges. This tool has been used to provide institutional assessment

of efforts to advance student learning and retention, and offer policymakers and the community with more suitable ways to inspect undergraduate education quality (CCSSE, 2006a).

Intentionally, the NSSE and the CCSSE instruments were created with a high degree of overlap (67%). The psychometric properties of the instruments have been explored extensively, demonstrating that the instrument was reliable and valid (Marti, 2006). In fact, McClenney and Marti (2006) stated that many of the CCSSE variables demonstrated solid relationships when validated against three separate data sources.

Although student characteristics and pre-college experiences can impact whether or not students enroll in higher education and how they persist, perform academically, and attain their educational goals; some authors have noted that classroom experiences and faculty and peer interactions were superior predictors of the most wanted educational outcomes more than pre-college characteristics (Kuh et al., 2006). Thus, student engagement rests on two distinct factors: (1) the degree of time and energy students invest in their studies and other educational activities and (2) the institutional investment and promotion of student participation in learning opportunities and utilization of campus student support services (Kuh et al., 2006; Tobolowsky, 2005).

As presented above, several student engagement factors have been identified as positively related to desirable student outcomes (Astin, 1993; CCSSE, 2006c; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh et al., 2006; Meuler, 2005; Pascarella & Terinzini, 1991; Robinson et al., 1996; Tobolowsky, 2005; Tinto, 1993). The

desirable student outcomes investigated in this study included engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention. The student engagement constructs investigated in this study included the following: student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation (see Appendix D). Student satisfaction levels focused on the overall satisfaction with the educational experience and relationships with peers, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices.

According to CCSSE (2006b),

The research findings are unequivocal. Student learning and student retention are correlated strongly with student engagement. The more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, with the subject matter being learned — the more likely they are to persist in their college studies and to achieve at higher levels.

Several research studies have emphasized this connection (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), and some have found significant relationships between participation in an orientation course and students' academic achievement and retention (see Appendix B) and engagement levels and satisfaction (see Appendix C). From years of research to determine how college affects students, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) affirmed that students who are actively involved both academically and socially gain more from their college experience than those who are not as involved. According to Kuh, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), a key factor in whether or not a college student experiences student

success is “student engagement,” which simply means the degree to which students take part in educationally effective practices (p.31).

College orientation courses have become one of the community colleges’ efforts to increase student engagement, satisfaction, and success. To illustrate this good practice in undergraduate education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987), several researchers have confirmed participation in an orientation course positively impacts student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation. These researchers confirmed the positive impact of orientation course participation in increasing student engagement and satisfaction levels. In fact, Tinto (1993) stated

it is apparent that the more students are involved in the social and intellectual life of a college, the more frequently they make contact with faculty and other students about learning issues, especially outside the class, the more students are likely to learn [and succeed] (p. 69).

Dolinsky (2005) found that 100% of students surveyed indicated that the first-year seminar course, required of all first-year students at a private four-year college in Massachusetts, helped them to acclimate to college academic life. Similar results were found at a private, four-year independent institution. Using the *First-Year Initiative Assessment*, Meuler (2005) found that students reported the course helped them with their adjustment to college life (72%), their interactions with faculty (65%), their confidence that they will succeed (75%), and getting to know other students (85%).

Similarly, Ward (2005) found that first-year seminar participants from 2000 to 2002 reported an increase in their academic survival skills, participation in at least three campus activities, and use of at least two essential support services as the result of the seminar. Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis reported similar findings. Through focus groups with students who completed the three-credit extended orientation course, Jackson (2005) found that students reported that the following were the most valuable aspects of the seminar: (a) having opportunities for interaction with other students; (b) having regular contact with advisors and faculty members; (c) learning to meet the demands of college (i.e., study and time-management skills and expectations of higher education); and (d) gaining an understanding of available campus resources. At Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the world's only liberal arts university for deaf and hard of hearing students, Anderson (2005) found that 73% of the students who took the first-year course indicated that the course helped them improve as a student and 72% would recommend the course to next year's students. Seventy-nine percent of the students surveyed indicated that the course made it easier for them to use campus resources and become involved in campus organizations.

The only two studies found that focused on student engagement and satisfaction at public, two-year colleges were those conducted by Reynolds (2005) and Korn (2005). Reynolds' study (2005) found that the extended orientation and study skills course (required for students who need a developmental writing course) dealt primarily with academic outcomes instead of social outcomes. The items students reported to be least impacted by the course included increased

participation in campus organizations (2.81) and increased attendance at campus cultural events (2.81) on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (significantly). Students who participated in the course indicated they would recommend the college to a friend (5.96) and wanted to return to the college for the next term (5.86). Similarly, Korn's study (2005) revealed that 98% of the community college students attending the College Success Seminar reported that they practiced college study skills learned in the course, 94% began to understand college expectations, and 97% began to explore career goals. More than 62% used the tutoring center or other academic support center at least once, 89% of the students gained confidence in asking for help, and 78% became acquainted with students whose backgrounds were different from their own.

Clearly, the majority of the research on student engagement and satisfaction related to orientation course participation was conducted with university and four-year college students, not community college students. Although the research mentioned student engagement and satisfaction, as well as positive educational experiences, have been connected to participation in college orientation, very little is still known about the interaction of the combination of such variables and their impact on student retention.

Academic Achievement

Developmental education programs, such as efforts to assist students with transitioning to the college environment, should base their effectiveness on measures of academic progress (Boylan, 1983). Throughout the college student orientation research literature, student grade point average (GPA) and cumulative

grade point average (CGPA) has been the most frequently noted variable measure of student academic achievement. Tinto (1975) identified the student GPA as a definite measure of academic integration, and Maxwell (1979) suggested that students' GPAs should be measured over several time periods. Thus, several researchers have since used GPAs and CGPA to compare students who participate in college orientation with those students who do not.

While the majority of orientation research studies have revealed a positive impact of student participation in an orientation on student GPA, a few studies have found that participation in an orientation seminar course has not significantly impacted academic achievement, as measured by GPA. Bolender (1994), for example, found that participation in a freshman orientation seminar did not significantly impact student academic achievement positively. In a study conducted at a church-related coeducational college in a small rural country in central Ohio, Bolender investigated CGPA of students who did and did not take a freshman seminar course, finding no significant differences in CGPA between students who enrolled in and successfully completed the course during the fall semester of their freshman year when compared to the same entering student cohort group who did not take the course.

It has been hypothesized that voluntary enrollment in such courses may account for discrepancies found with academic achievement between participants and nonparticipants. Similar to Bolender's study (1994), Fidler (1991) found that in 14 years of a 16-year study, seminar participants had lower predicted GPAs than

nonparticipants, but higher retention rates. Fidler concluded that voluntary selection of the course may have influenced the findings.

To counteract this volunteer effect, Strumpf and Hunt (1993) conducted an experimental study by assigning students to take or not take a freshman orientation course. Of the 240 students who indicated an interest in enrolling in the course, 77 students were randomly chosen to enroll in the course (the experimental group) and 80 students in the control group. The experimental group earned significantly higher semester CGPAs (at or above a 2.0 on a 4 point scale) during all four semesters examined. Of particular interest to these researchers was Black students' academic performance at predominately White institutions. Upon closer examination of this particular group of students, the researchers found that Black students who were permitted to enroll in the orientation course had significantly higher GPAs for two years, even when compared to the Black students who indicated that they were interested in enrolling in the course, but were not allowed to enroll in the course (control group). From this, Strumpf and Hunt (1993) concluded that student participation in the orientation course "has a significant and long term impact on the retention in good academic standing of students" (p. 12).

Stupka (1986) found differences between three methods of orienting new college students. Students who participated in the College Success extended orientation course throughout the duration of the semester outperformed students who only attended a four-hour new student orientation and students who only attended a one-hour information session. In fact, upon closer examination, orientation course participants achieved a 2.56 GPA (based on a 4 point scale)

compared to 2.07 GPA for the four-hour new student orientation and 1.64 GPA for students who only attended a “last minute” informational session. The greatest significant GPA difference (.94) was between the one-hour session and the semester-long course. Stupka concluded that based on student GPA measures, the orientation course had the strongest impact on student GPA when compared to a four- and one-hour session to orientate college students.

These results have also been demonstrated with special student populations, such as the case with Folger, Carter, and Chase’s (2004) research. In this study the researchers investigated a six-week peer support group to orient new students to campus resources, promote connections with peers/staff/faculty, and encourage campus involvement in student activities, clubs, and organizations. The sample consisted of identified first-semester, first-generation college freshman enrolled full-time at a Midwestern residential university. The researchers found that at the end of the peer support group program, student participants in the program achieved significantly higher first and second semester GPAs, as well as higher CGPAs than their nonparticipating peers.

Using Tinto’s (1975) model of student retention and a matched student sample (based on predicted GPA prior to entering the University of South Carolina), Maisto and Tammi (1991) found that students who took a freshman seminar course earned significantly higher GPAs (2.60 on a 4 point scale) than did non-participants (2.45). Not only did the seminar course students outperform their predicted GPA (2.43), when the seminar course grade was removed from the GPA, the difference between participants and nonparticipants still remained significant.

These findings demonstrate the importance of matching samples and the significant academic achievement differences between those students who participate in orientation and those who do not.

Sidle and McReynolds (1999) supported Maisto and Tammi's (1991) research and found that students who completed a freshman-year experience course tended to earn higher CGPAs and were more likely to be in good academic standing (GPA above 2.0 on a 4 point scale) than students who did not take the course. Although the researchers indicated that this affect could not be interpreted as causal, the outcomes associated with the compared student groups indicated a positive relationship between academic achievement (completing more of first year, earning higher CGPAs, completing similar percentages of general education requirements, and having higher ratios of earned semester hours to attempted hours) and course participation. Similar results were also found at four North Carolina community colleges. In Glass and Garrett's (1995) study of a new student orientation course, students who successfully completed the orientation course earned significantly higher GPAs (.34 on a 4 point scale) one-year after they first enrolled than did the students who did not take the course, even when controlling for the influence of entrance placement scores.

Busby and others (2002) also found significant first semester GPA variation between freshman students who attended orientation and those who did not. In a study at Stephen F. Austin State University, the researchers discovered that on a 4.0 point scale, the average first semester GPA for those who attended orientation was 2.11, while the average GPA of the college freshman who did not

attend orientation was 1.73. Thus, as found in the above mentioned studies, student participation in an orientation can significantly impact academic achievement, as measured by semester GPA and CGPA.

Such seminar courses have also been shown to *improve* a student's GPA. Using a matched sample of second-semester, freshmen on academic probation (having a GPA below 1.50 on a 4.0 point scale), Lipsky and Ender (1990) found that participation in a one-credit *Strategies for Achieving Academic Success* course had a significant positive impact on student academic performance. While the course participant group achieved higher CGPAs than the students who elected not to take the course, the variation in academic achievement between the two groups was most significant at the end of the semester that the course was offered, slightly diminishing during the subsequent two years. Similarly, Keenan and Gabovitch (1995) found that over a four-year period, students who enrolled in the freshman seminar actually improved their GPA the following semester after enrollment in the course, and the control group of non-seminar students actually decreased their GPA the following semester. The students who took the seminar averaged 2.27 beginning GPA (compared to the control group of 2.53 GPA). Yet, the GPA for the subsequent semester changed to 2.68 (.41 increase) for the seminar participants and 2.48 (.05 decrease) for the non-participants.

Wilkie and Kuckuck (1989) concluded that "Participation in the required orientation course, then, seems to have had a positive impact on the grades that students achieved throughout their first three years" (p. 10) after conducting an experimental study at Indiana University of Pennsylvania's branch campuses

during the fall semester of 1984. At-risk students (as identified as between 17-19 years old, full-time, new freshman, accepted into a 4-year degree program, and high risk with a first-year predicted GPA of less than 1.50) were randomly selected to register for a pilot orientation course, entitled *The Student's Role in the University: Freshman Seminar*. The course carried three semester credit hours and was intended to assist students with developing the skills and attitudes needed to successfully meet the new challenge of college. During the three-year experimental research study, Wilkie and Kuckuck found that the CGPA's of high-risk students who successfully completed the orientation course in the first semester of their freshman year were significantly higher than those who did not take the course. This significant difference in mean CGPA was consistent over the three-year period following the course completion.

More recently, several researchers have supported these positive relationships between participation in an orientation course and increased GPA. In fact, the statistical procedures to illuminate the findings have also become more sophisticated. For example, Spector (2005) found that students who participated in the three-credit University 100 course earned higher GPAs and good academic standing through several semesters when compared to their peers who did not participate. These findings were also backed by Sparks (2005), who found that students who completed the course earned significantly higher GPAs (2.61) than students who did not participate in the course (2.31).

According to Guell (2005), the "first-year seminar participation alone has no statistically significant impact on the likelihood of retention, but it does have a

statistically significant impact on first-semester grades” (p. 56). Guell conducted a logistic regression to estimate the impact of pre-entry and programmatic variables on retention, while at the same time a linear regression to estimate the impact of these variables on first-semester GPA. Since the orientation course was “markedly higher than other 100-level courses that are not first-year seminars,” Guell noted an important caveat to the findings of statistical significance of increased GPAs (the numerical impact of the course on grades was .144 GPA points).

To investigate the impact of the orientation course on regular and conditionally admitted students’ GPA, multivariate analysis of covariance procedures were employed by Jackson (2005). Although Jackson found no statistically significant differences in GPA between students who took the orientation course and those who did not for regular admitted students, a statistically significant difference was found between students who participated in the orientation course and those who did not for conditionally admitted students. The results were significant for the conditionally accepted students even when Jackson removed the orientation grade and controlled for differences in demographics, enrollment, and academic preparation and support program participation.

Staley (2005) and VerDuin (2005) also found student participation in the extended orientation course positively impacted improved academic performance. When compared with first-year students whose credentials were similar or slightly higher prior to starting college, students who participated in the first-year seminar

demonstrated an advantage in first-semester GPAs. Casady (2005) identified the following findings:

1. Students who carried at least 15 credit hours a term achieved higher GPAs than full-time students who carried 12 credit hours and part-time students.
2. Those students who reported studying at least two hours outside of class for every one hour in class earned the highest GPAs.
3. Working a job less than 20 hours a week did not have an effect on GPA, but employment hours over 20 hours a week had a negative impact on GPA.
4. Students who attended class regularly with no more than one absence per term in a course achieved the highest GPAs.
5. Students who slept seven to eight hours a night earned the highest GPAs.
6. Student who reported eating three nutritious meals a day earned the best grades.
7. Students with the highest GPAs reported the most positive experiences with academic achievement.
8. Use of three campus resources had a significant impact on students' GPAs: computer lab, campus library, and writing center.
9. Students who regularly attended or participated in a religious center – on or off campus – had the highest GPAs.
10. Student who participated in out-of-class activities or events achieved better grades. They were more committed to returning to college the next year and to graduating within five years.

In summary, much of the research literature cited student GPA as the standard measure to gauge academic achievement. Considering the increased number of students entering higher education today identified as under prepared for meeting the demands of postsecondary education (Howard & Jones, 2000), current research is needed to examine student academic achievement in relation to institutional efforts to assist college students. In fact, while numerous studies have explored student academic achievement, (using the GPA as the variable of achievement) since 2002, very few recent studies have examined institutional efforts such as college student orientation. Likewise, while the majority of the literature revealed an overall positive impact of participation in an orientation course on student academic achievement, the majority of the research was conducted at the university and four-year college level, demonstrating a need for additional research on community college student academic achievement.

Retention

Several retention demographic variables have been discussed in the literature with regards to college orientation. The variables typically included in retention studies vary widely depending on the researcher's objective. Andreu (2002) listed and defined more than 20 variables chosen when studying retention. Andreu's review encouraged community colleges to use these identified variables when conducting retention research studies. Therefore, the variables selected for the current study were derived from Andreu's list of community college retention variables.

Of the variables chosen when studying student retention, Brawer (1996) noted that employment status, family commitment, and financial concerns directly related to student retention. Student high school GPA and program of study, institutional size, parental educational background, and college admission test scores were also explored in the retention literature (McGrath & Braunstein, 1997). The majority of student retention research, however, has been conducted at four-year colleges and universities, where student data can be easily obtained (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005). Due to the open-door policy, decreased admissions processes, and the lack of such data on all entering students at community colleges, data on many of these variables are not readily available to researchers. The variables reviewed in the following sub-sections were those found most significantly related to student retention and success in the research literature. The majority of these are, therefore, included in this study.

Student demographic variables and characteristics. Several researchers explored student demographic characteristics as possible predictors of retention (Reason, 2003). Astin (1997) indicated that four variables (high school grades, admissions test scores [ACT or SAT], sex of the student, and race of the student) “account[ed] for the bulk of variance in retention” (p.649). Using longitudinal data from Patrick Henry Community College in Martinsville, Virginia, Mohammadi (1996) explored demographic factors related to retention of first-time students enrolled during the fall semester of 1988 through the fall semester of 1992. Although Mohammadi found that age, race, sex, and enrollment status of students were *not* significant predictors of retention, the number of credit hours taken and

successfully completed per semester *were* found as significant predictors of retention. This was the only research study found that explored student demographic factors of first-semester community college students related to retention.

McGrath and Braunstein (1997) supported Mohammadi's (1996) findings and determined that several variables were not significant predictors of retention from freshman to sophomore year:

age, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, parent educational backgrounds, students' family native language, commuting distance, and participation in the residential life program, high school program of study, size of students' high school graduating classes, the highest degree the students plan to pursue, how students perceive the general reputation of the college's standards, the amount of time students plan to study each week, participation in the college's work study program, and the students' coping skills, receptivity to support services, and impressions of the college (p.399).

However, McGrath and Braunstein did note that a students' perception of other students and earned first semester GPA were the most significant predictors of retention.

When reviewing student characteristics related to retention, Brawer (1996) concluded that full-time attendance (12 or more semester credit hours) was found to be the most prevalent characteristic of students who remain enrolled. Concerning student age, Brawer indicated the research findings yielded mixed

results, with some studies maintaining that older students are more likely to discontinue their studies and younger students tend to persist at higher rates than older students. The National Center for Postsecondary Statistics (2003b) identifies age as significantly impacting student retention. This report indicated that most students who began college for the first time in 1989-90 were age 18 or younger with five-year persistence and degree attainment rates higher than any other student age group. Of all the first-time college students who attained a bachelor's degree within 5 years, 90% were 18 or younger when they began pursuing a degree. This report also showed that students who began college after the age of 18 were hampered with additional persistence risk factors which increased with their age. Although neither age at entry nor the number of risk factors was related to persistence and attainment rates for those who began at less-than-two-year institutions, older nontraditional students who began at either two-year or four-year institutions were less likely than their younger counterparts to attain a degree or remain enrolled anywhere in postsecondary education after 5 years.

Participation in orientation. Researchers have conducted many college student retention studies, ultimately seeking to identify the most effective institutional practices to combat attrition. As noted previously, orientation courses are one of the most widely used and best educational practices (Brawer, 1996). However, retention rates for those who successfully completed an orientation those when compared those who did not do not always differ significantly. For instance, Bolender's study (1994), found that students who enrolled in and successfully completed the freshman seminar course did not achieve higher retention rates than

students who did not take the course. Other researchers have found similar results when studying at-risk students. This was the case in Wilkie and Kuckuck's (1989) longitudinal experimental study. To determine the effect of a semester-long orientation course on student retention, the researchers identified at-risk students attending classes at one of the university branch campuses. Controlling for the volunteer effect, students were assigned to take the course or not (control group). Although retention percentages were different between the students who took the course and those who did not, the retention rates over a three year period did not reach statistical significance. During the second year of the study, the retention difference between students who took the course and those who did not was only 3%; whereas, during the fourth year, the difference between these groups was noted as 13%. Wilkie and Kuckuck explained this as practical significance in that the study focused on high-risk students, none of whom was predicted to complete their first year with a CGPA above 1.50. Yet, 65 students (including 45% of the students who successfully completed the course, and 32% of the students from the control group) have been retained into their senior year (p.12).

Nevertheless, the majority of research has confirmed the positive impact of such programming on student retention and identified specific variables used to predict retention.

Glass and Garrett's research (1995) found that participation in an orientation course helped college students regardless of age, gender, race, major, scores on entrance tests, or employment status. The researchers discovered that the

students' sex and race were significantly related to GPA, but the variations disappeared when considering entrance reading, writing, and math scores. Glass and Garrett also found, based on a 4-point scale, that women earned higher GPAs (2.53) than men (2.33), and White students (2.49) outperformed Black students (2.13). Entrance scores did not differ significantly by gender or race, except that practical significant results were found between White students earning more semester credit hours during the year studied than did Black students. Astin's (1997) research supported Glass and Garrett's findings, revealing that Asian American and/or White students were most likely to be retained in college, while other racial groups were less likely to be retained.

Stupka (1986) and Lipsky and Ender (1990) reported similar student retention results. Stupka's (1986) research study selected student age, gender, recommended reading placement, and recommended writing placement as control variables most likely to have an effect on the dependent variables of his study (number of semester units of credit earned, GPA, and dropout rate). Stupka found that students who participated in the college success extended orientation course throughout the semester outperformed both students who attended a four-hour new student orientation and those who attended a one-hour information session. In fact, students who participated in the semester-long orientation course had a lower dropout rate (91% retained) than students who attended the four-hour new student orientation (82% retained) and those who attended the one-hour information session (79% retained). Lipsky and Ender's study (1990) found similar results with probationary students invited to participate in a one-credit study skills course. In

Lipsky and Ender's study, the one-year retention rate of students who completed the course differed significantly (14%) from those who did not complete the course. Although not statistically significant, during the subsequent year, a 9% difference in retention between students who took the course and those who did not was also found.

Hoeber (1981) reported that an Orientation/Self-management course developed to assist conditionally accepted students at the four-year Mercy College, Detroit, was successful at raising the retention rate students who had below a "C" average in high school. Prior to offering the course, the attrition rate among the conditionally admitted full-time students was 95%. After the course, attrition dropped by half. According to Hoeber (1981), overall the student groups remained the same during the study, and the only difference to account for these results was participation in the course.

A longitudinal study (Keenan & Gabovitch, 1995) to assess the affect of a one-credit, 8-week freshman seminar, found that student retention to the second semester of the freshman year improved for those who enrolled in the seminar during the first-semester when compared to students who did not. Similarly, Sidle and McReynolds (1999) found that 63% of the students who elected to participate in the freshman-year experience course reenrolled for the fall term of the second year, while only 56% of the students who elected not to participate in the course persisted into the second year.

Strumpf and Hunt's (1993) study of first-time, full-time freshmen at a large, predominately White, urban institution revealed statistically significant

results regarding student retention. These researchers found that students who expressed an interest (via survey) in taking an orientation course and were permitted to enroll in the orientation course had significantly higher retention rates than the control group of students who did not take the course. These results remained statistically significant both during the semester of the course and for the three subsequent semesters of the study. Although the sample sizes were quite small and not equivalent (Black experimental = 28, Black control = 16 when compared to entire sample $N = 72$ experimental, 75 control), significant retention findings were also found between the groups for the minority students, during two of the three semesters, as it was expected that these students may experience different outcomes due to racial status at a predominately White institution. The researchers stated that the course can “contribute significantly to retention rates beyond that attributed to motivation alone” (p.12).

These findings were also supported by Fidler’s study (1991) conducted at the University of South Carolina to determine the relationship of freshman orientation seminars to sophomore student return rates. Through analysis of data collected annually from 1973 to 1988, Fidler compared retention rates of orientation seminar participants with nonparticipants. Over the 16-year period, Fidler found that students who participated in the freshman orientation seminar were more likely to return for their sophomore year than were nonparticipants. These results were found statistically significant for 11 of the 16 years. For the remaining 5 years of the study, course participants were still retained at higher levels than the nonparticipants although not at significantly higher rates.

While the minority in the overall findings, Rugg (2005) reported mixed and inconsistent findings when exploring the relationship between first-time, first-year student enrollment the first-year seminar and long term student retention, one-year, two-year, and three-year retention rates. To explore this further, Rugg increased the statistical test power by combining the fall cohorts into larger samples representing consecutive years (2000-2002). When these larger more stable samples were tested, significant differences favoring the students who participated in the orientation course were found for one-year and two-year distributions. Statistically significant retention results were also found for the three-year period under review.

The majority of the recent research has supported previous findings and indicated positive relationships between participation in orientation courses and student retention. For instance, Derby and Smith (2004) studied 7,466 students attending a Midwestern community college from the fall semester of 1999 through the spring semester of 2002. In this instance, students who did not take the orientation course were more likely to drop-out or not re-enroll after a break in their matriculation. Overall, students who completed the orientation course were more likely to maintain enrollment, return to campus after a break in enrollment, and persist toward degree completion as compared to students who did not complete the orientation course. Additional studies have reported similar findings (Blowers, 2005; Casady, 2005; Korn, 2005; Rugg, 2005; Sparks, 2005; Staley, 2005; Wood, 2005), and Jackson (2005) found that participation in an orientation course added an average of six percentage points to retention rates, even after

controlling for relevant student demographics, enrollment, academic preparation, and academic support program participation.

Dolinsky (2005) also reported that since the College began the first-year seminar course, the overall retention rate of students returning to the College has increased from 69% in 2001 to 80% in 2003. Furthermore, Korn (2005) found that the 2003 cohort returned at a statistically significant higher rate (86%) than those students who did not take the course. Although the sample sizes were not equal, Sparks (2005) also found that students participating in the seminar course were retained at higher percentages during the first term of enrollment (94.3% compared to 87.6%) and returned for the following semester at higher percentages (88.5% compared to 66.7%). Casady (2005) reported statistically significant differences in retention between students who participated in the course were retained in higher percentages (81.3%) than those who did not (17.6%).

Finally, Pattengale (2005) reported that implementation of the orientation course led indirectly to a \$1.8 million dollar and directly to a \$58,000 annual budget savings since its inception by influencing student retention. Such retention rates grew from 1998 (68%) to 2002 (81%), and four-year graduation rates increased from 36% to 54% during the same time period. Pattengale (2005) attributed the sustained increases to the introduction of the course, which should be of interest to administrators.

To investigate the impact of the orientation course on one-year student retention rates, Jackson (2005) employed logistical regression procedures. When controlling for relevant student demographics, enrollment, academic preparation,

and academic support program participation, Jackson (2005) found that students who participated in the first-year seminar were retained at significantly higher rates compared to non-participating students. This adjusted retention significance, based on the controlled differences in student demographics, enrollment, academic preparation, and academic support program participation, was a 9% difference ($p < .01$).

In summary, many studies have connected retention with student demographic variables, overall finding that postsecondary institutions do attempt to improve student retention rates through various interventions, most commonly student orientation courses. Brawer's (1996) national review of retention and attrition rates in the 1990s reported that orientation programming was one of the most common proactive intervention strategies used in American colleges and universities to help college students successfully transition to the campus community and remain enrolled. Little research, however, has been explored the value of new student orientation at community colleges (Cook et al., 2003).

With more than half of new college students attending community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2007) and leaving immediately after the first semester (Tinto, 1993), institutions have a strong interest in retaining students. This is especially true since student retention rates have often been tied to financial resources (Glynn et al., 2003) or indirect measures of institutional effectiveness (Derby & Smith, 2004). The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2004) documented this student departure phenomenon and indicated that the overall retention rates for freshman returning for sophomore year

at four-year colleges (fall 2001) was 74%, while freshman retention rates during the same year at two-year colleges was 55%. This report also revealed that Virginia has large percentages of first-year students in community colleges (59%).

Persistence/Graduation

In addition to college student retention, student persistence and graduation rates have also been researched, especially since the need for a more educated society exists (McCabe, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Trow, 2001). Within this body of research, several variables related significantly to student persistence toward graduation. Of the literature reviewed, the following student variables identified as significantly related to persistence are summarized below: age, first-semester and orientation course grades, and enrollment patterns.

According to the National Center for Postsecondary Statistics (2003b), age significantly impacts student persistence. The report indicated that students 18 years old and younger who began college for the first time in 1989-90 had the highest five-year persistence and degree attainment rates compared to students who began postsecondary education later in life. Of all the first-time college students who attained a bachelor's degree within 5 years, 90% were 18 years old or younger at the of enrollment. This report also noted that students who enrolled after the age of 18 were hampered with additional persistence risk factors, which increased with age. Although neither age at entry nor the number of risk factors was related to persistence and attainment rates for those who began at less-than-2-year institutions, older nontraditional students who began at either 2-year or 4-year institutions were less likely than their younger counterparts to attain any degree or

to still be enrolled after 5 years. Furthermore, the National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey (2003a) indicated that the United States and Virginia State three year graduation rates for Associate degree students were 30.6% and 20.1% respectively.

Researchers have also examined student persistence and graduation rates. When considering the variables previously discussed, grades earned in a student's first semester were noted to significantly impact voluntary persistence (McGrath & Braunstein, 1997). Students who had higher high school grades, higher SAT scores, and higher first semester grades were more likely to return the following semester, especially if they were not experiencing financial difficulty and were participating in the college's financial aid program. These findings were also supported by Hyers and Joslin (1998) who found that grades earned in a required freshman year seminar were superior predictors of academic achievement and persistence than high school rank and SAT scores.

Busby and others (2002) and Derby and Smith (2004) examined student enrollment patterns to determine the relationship between orientation participation and persistence. When allowing 5 years to complete a degree, freshman students who attended orientation graduated at significantly higher rates than those who did not (Busby et al., 2002). Derby and Smith (2004) found that degree attainment within the two-year traditional time frame was related to enrollment in an orientation course. This was also found true for students who did not complete their degree within the two-year time frame, as those who took the orientation course persisted at significantly higher rates than did students who did not take the

course. Significant relationships were also noted for students who took a one, two, or three semester break in enrollment (called “stopping out”), as those students who took the orientation course were more likely to re-enroll than did students who did not take the course and also took a one, two, or three semester enrollment break. Obviously, students who did not take the orientation course had significantly lower persistence and graduation rates and were more likely to drop-out when compared to those who took the class. Thus, orientation seminar participants are more likely to persist to graduation and typically have increased retention to the second year and to graduation when compared to those who do not participate in the course. Stieha (2005) also found a positive correlation between orientation participation and higher graduation rates, even for students identified as most “at-risk” (required to take nine, or even 12, credit hours of developmental coursework and the least academically prepared for the rigors of college work).

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review in this chapter addressed the evolution and outcomes of orientation courses and the student development and retention theoretical models typically used to guide them. Outcomes for university and four-year college orientation seminars have been well documented, indicating that student participation in an orientation course promotes academic achievement, engagement, satisfaction, and retention. All of these combined improve student satisfaction, success, retention, and persistence.

The efficacy of the required community college orientation course remains unknown, especially regarding student outcomes with engagement, satisfaction,

academic achievement, and retention and how these complex variables interact. Empirical research pertaining to orientation courses in the community college sector remains a gap in the literature, especially research employing multivariate and logistical analysis (Green, 1998). Very little is known about the predictive validity of community college student retention related to student participation in an orientation course, academic achievement, engagement, and satisfaction. This is especially true when considering the increased community college enrollment (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004). All of the findings are significant to postsecondary administrators and community college student outcomes need further exploration.

Community college administrators have a philosophical, political, and societal obligation to investigate whether or not their commitment to access, opportunity, and success is achieved through orientation initiatives. Determining the impact of participation in an orientation course is needed to establish baseline data for community college students, as well as offer insight for institutional policy and practice (Kramer, 2003; Tobolowsky, 2005; Upcraft, 2003). The findings of this study will not only contribute to the growing body of community college students and orientation research, but also assist community college administrative leaders with best practices to assisting new students and improving student success. As Barefoot & Gardner (1993) noted, such outcomes, intentionally impacted by orientation should be evaluated, reported, and shared.

Many of the studies found for review involved more educationally experienced students, dissimilar in many ways to the community college student

population (Mooney, 1989; Pitts et al., 1999; Sanderson et al., 2000). According to these researchers and others (Grimes, 1997; Grimes & David, 1999), many community college students attending the first-semester of college lack the basic college survival skills, preparation, and commitment to successfully complete, or even compare, to four-year sector students. This “lack of research on community colleges is a particularly serious problem when it comes to the study of retention” (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005, p. 12); thus, to determine the impact of orientation course participation and establish student retention predictor indicators for Virginia community college students, the following variables were investigated: student demographics, engagement, satisfaction with relationships and with the institution, academic achievement, and retention.

Accordingly, balancing open-door policies with adequate student preparation for college success has required academic and personal development through specific support programs, such as orientation (Grimes & David, 1999). For open-door and less selective institutions with a large percentage of working freshman and first-generation college students, similar to TCC, this opportunity for development and support has been and will continue to be critical to student success (Ryan & Glenn, 2004). If the primary goal of orientation courses is truly to help students adjust, promote academic success and graduation, reduce trial-and-error behavior, cultivate use of and involvement in extracurricular activities and help services, promote faculty-student interaction, and reduce costly administrative time, then how students’ experiences relate to success must be

explored (Tighe, 2006). More specifically, it is critical to determine what variables are most directly related to participation in an orientation course.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

The majority of research literature on college student orientation programs has confirmed the effectiveness of the orientation course in the following three areas: (1) promoting student persistence to graduation; (2) increasing student retention; and (3) improving student academic performance (Cuseo, 1991). Supporting these findings, the literature investigating students' participation in orientation at postsecondary institutions also revealed that the orientation course significantly impacts student satisfaction and engagement (Tobolowsky, 2005). Research to illustrate the value of new student orientation at two-year colleges and the study of predictor variables related to community college student retention associated with student demographic characteristics, student engagement, satisfaction, and academic achievement has been found lacking (Cook et al., 2003; Green, 1998).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine the impact of participation in a community college orientation course on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention. This study compared the engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention rates of those students at Tidewater Community College (TCC) who participated in the orientation course with those who had not. Table 1 includes all the variables used in this study.

Table 1

Single Items Measures

Variable name	Description and scale	Mean	SD
Academic preparation	No time spent preparing for class during a week (0) to more than 30 hours spent in a week preparing for class (5)	1.87	1.06
Age	24 yrs and under (1) over 25 yrs (2)	1.42	.493
Attendance	Less than full-time (1) or Full-time (2)	1.58	.493
CGPA	Pass/fail classes only (1) or A average (8)	3.03	.98
Ethnicity	American Indian or other Native American (1) Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander (2) Native Hawaiian (3) Black or African American, Non-Hispanic (4), White, Non-Hispanic (5), Hispanic, Latino, Spanish (6), or Other (7)	4.56	1.13
Extracurricular involvement	No participation in college-sponsored activities (0) to more than 30 hours in a week (5)	.06	.50
Orientation participation	Participated (1) or did not (0)	.48	.50

Parental education	First generation (1) or not first generation college student (2)	1.67	.713
Relationship satisfaction	Extremely poor (1) to extremely good (7)		
Peers		5.36	1.34
Faculty		5.51	1.27
Administrative personnel		4.69	1.56
Satisfaction with experience	Poor (1) to excellent (4)	3.13	.65
Retention	Not returning or uncertain (0) or Within next 12 months (1)	.72	.44
Sex	Male (1) or female (2)	1.62	.49

This chapter describes the research design of the study and the methods used to examine student participation in the orientation course related to student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention rates. The instrumentation, data collection procedures, research design, sample and population, orientation course and institutional context, research questions, data analysis, and the studies limitations and delimitations are all presented.

Community College Student Survey of Engagement

The data for this study came from the results of the Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE) survey instrument, *The Community College Student Report* (CCSR), administered at Tidewater Community College. The CCSSR was administered at TCC during the spring semester of 2005. The CCSSR, a 38 question paper-and-pencil annual survey of community college students, measures students' participation in educational experiences that previous

research has connected to desired outcomes (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). As presented in chapter two, several of these outcomes directly connect to orientation course participation.

Noted as a “versatile, research-based tool appropriate for multiple uses” (CCSSE, 2006a) and confirmed as a valid and reliable instrument (McClenney & Marti, 2006), the CCSSR CSR not only has served as a community college performance and national norms benchmarking instrument, it has also become a diagnostic tool and monitoring device to document and improve student’ educational experiences and institutional effectiveness (CCSSE, 2006a). The CCSR questions were primarily asked in a structured Likert-type response scale format (see Appendix E for the complete survey), focused on student participation in empirically confirmed effective educational practices linked to desirable outcomes, such as those investigated in this study.

The CCSSE requested respondents to specify the frequency with which they engaged in a number of activities (i.e. interacting with faculty in and out of class). Respondents indicated whether they participated in or planned to take advantage of a variety of learning opportunities, including college orientation. Respondents reported the number of hours spent each week on activities that included preparation for class and participation in extracurricular activities, as well as the frequency with which they used the academic and support services provided by the college. Respondents also reported their perceptions regarding the quality of their relationships on campus and overall satisfaction with their educational experience at TCC, whether or not they intended to return the college, and if they

participated in the orientation course. Respondents were also asked their current overall college grade point average (GPA) at TCC.

Surprisingly, only one of the CCSSE questions addressed participation in orientation directly. This CCSSR question focused on whether or not students had, planned to, or did not plan to participate in an orientation program or course (see question 8h). This question determined participation in orientation and was used to explore the relationship of orientation on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention.

According to Aasen (personal communication, June 4, 2007), TCC's Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness, administration of the survey required for TCC provide the CCSSE office a list of all courses offered on all campuses during the spring semester of 2005. The course list provided to the CCSSE office contained the course discipline, catalog number, section code, instructor identifier, course name, the start/end date, start time, and the actual student enrollment in the course. From this list, the CCSSE office randomly selected the courses that would participate in the survey, ensuring that each degree and certificate program and discipline was represented, as well as stratifying the sample by the class time (morning, afternoon, and evening). Only college credit courses were selected to participate. All off-campus (military base and dual credit), distance learning/online, lab sections associated with a lecture, individual instruction, self-paced, independent study, and English as a Second Language, and developmental courses were excluded. Four-week sessions or classes not meeting during the survey administration period were also excluded from the sample.

The CCSSE office required TCC to have a CCSSE Liaison, who was provided with strict guidelines (Survey Administrator Procedure Guide) on the administration procedures for the survey. Since TCC is a multiple campus institution, TCC had a Survey Administrator for each campus. The CCSSE office provided TCC with the pre-packaged surveys by the list of randomly selected courses that would participate in the survey. All The survey packets were shipped to TCC for distribution.

Brief instructional training sessions were provided to a small group of TCC employees on how to administer the CCSR. The TCC employees served as Survey Administrators, who visited the selected courses during class time. The Survey Administrators brought the CCSSE survey packets to the selected classes, read the instructions aloud to the students in the classroom, collected the surveys after the students completed them during the class (approximately 25 minutes), completed a course information sheet to indicate how many students were in the classroom during the time the survey was administered, sealed the surveys in pre-labeled envelopes, and hand delivered the completed surveys to TCC's Institutional Effectiveness Office. TCC then mailed the completed surveys in pre-labeled envelopes to the CCSSE team, headquartered at The University of Texas at Austin. The CCSSE team conducted all the data analysis, which resulted in providing TCC with a CDrom of all the student completed data with crosstabs to interpret coding and an institutional report.

The CCSSR 2005 raw data set with crosstabs was requested and obtained from the TCC's Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The data included all student

completed survey responses for the spring semester of 2005 enrolled TCC students who participated in the survey. For a complete depiction of what the data files contained, please see Appendix E. The student surveys could not be linked to actual student transcripts, as surveys were anonymous and confidentiality of all student responses was upheld. Findings are reported in a group format.

Research Design

This study uses a cross-sectional, static group comparison secondary data analysis research design to explore the research questions. This study explores student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention for students based on their enrollment in an orientation course at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Virginia. Re-analyzing, pre-collected survey data was selected as the means of data analysis for this study because of the ability to access available data from a large community college student sample, and to obtain information that was not readily available from any other source. Time and resource savings from using existing data permitted the researcher to explore issues that needed to be known now, especially given the rapid expansion of enrollment, available records, and the accessibility and ease of use of such data.

The secondary data analysis methodology was an excellent choice for this study. As Kiecolt and Nathan (1985) stated:

Survey research easily lends itself to the exploration of a wide range of topics requiring different types of data (demographic, attitudinal, behavioral, and so on).....The potential for accomplishing original research with precollected data is nonetheless tremendous (p. 9).

The data available from the CCSR enabled the researcher to test the research questions on a large community college sample and determine whether or not participation in the orientation course at TCC had an impact on these variables.

Sample and Population

The subjects for this study included all students who were enrolled at TCC during the spring semester of 2005 ($N = 23,423$) and participated in the CCSSE survey during that semester. The CSSR data used for this study were obtained from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at TCC. A total of 1381 students participated in the CCSSE during the spring semester of 2005. Only students who responded that this was the first time taking the survey were included in the data analysis (20 did not respond and 23 took the survey again). For the survey again question (question 3), 43 (3.1%) surveys were removed from the sample. Since the study focused on orientation participation, only students who responded to question 8h (Participation in a College Orientation Program or Course) on the CCSSE were included in the data analysis. A total of 1,316 students responded to the orientation participation question. They responded in one of the following ways I have not done, nor plan to do (468 students), I plan to do (212 students), or I have done (636 students). To simplify data analysis, students who responded I plan to do or I have not done, nor plan to do were combined (680 students). From the CCSSE computerized subject data files, information was filtered based on the student's response to the question regarding participation in a college orientation program or course. The subjects were sorted based on the independent variable responses, which have two operational methodologies: (1) I have done and (2) I have not done. Twenty-two surveys (1.6%) were incomplete on

this question and were removed from the sample. Of the total 1381 student participants, 1316 total students became the sample after the above described surveys were removed (4.7%). According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), the common “rule of thumb” in quantitative research was to use the largest sample attainable (p. 229). Thus, the sample size for this study more than meets the defined criteria called for, which was further supported by Meyers et al. (2006), who recommended a 200 subjects minimum (p.468).

Orientation Course

For this study, orientation was defined as students’ self-report on the CCSSR of participating in an orientation course. At TCC, the orientation course offered to students is the Student Development College Success Skills (SDV100) course. This standardized course carries one semester credit hour, offered throughout the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) to provide students with the information, skills, and tools to successfully transition to the college environment. The course has various formats and lengths (on-campus, hybrid, and online), but the majority resemble the extended orientation seminar (Tighe, 2006). The SDV100 course is a graduation requirement for all TCC associate degree and certificate programs.

Since the inception of the STD100 course (estimated more than 20 years ago), the course description and objectives have remained the same. During the summer of 2005, the VCCS officially changed the course title to College Success Skills and the course prefix from “STD” to “SDV,” which stands for “Student

Development.” The course description remained identical and contained the following:

Assists students in transition to colleges. Provides overviews of college policies, procedures, and curricular offerings. Encourages contacts with other students and staff. Assists students toward college success through information regarding effective study habits, career and academic planning, and other college resources available to students. May include English and math placement testing. Strongly recommended for beginning students.

Required for graduation. Lecture 1 hour per week (TCC, 2007b, p. 198).

Furthermore, the objectives of the SDV 100 course at TCC contained the following overall content areas: (1) To acquaint students with the college’s environment, services, resources, policies/procedures, and expectations and (2) to provide students with socialization opportunities and information concerning study skills, diversity, technology, time and stress management, and test-taking (Tighe, 2006, p.43).

TCC provides several instructional formats for the SDV100 courses. The on-campus orientation course meets for a total of 16 contact hours. While the total number of contact hours required for the course remains consistent, the length of the course and actual class face-to-face course meetings differ based on the SDV100 course section that the student selects. Course sections of the SDV100 course at TCC range from meeting once a week for 1 hour to twice a week for 45 minutes (both 16 weeks) or for two and a half hours for 6 weeks. The online SDV100 course sections have no time restrictions or face-to-face on-campus

meetings. Students who enroll in an online section complete all assignments and submit all homework, quizzes, and exams through an Internet connection (Tighe, 2006). Furthermore, the SDV100 course has also been offered in a hybrid format, whereby the instruction combines the use of Internet and face-to-face on-campus meetings to cover the course material by alternating weeks they meet on campus throughout the semester (16 weeks).

Institutional Context

The current study was conducted at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia. TCC represents the second largest of 23 institutions on 40 campuses that make up the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). TCC annually enrolls more than 35,000 students (almost one-half of the region's residents who attended a college or university). The institution was ranked the 37th largest community college in the nation and among the top 50 fastest growing large community colleges (TCC, 2007a). The college serves the South Hampton Roads region with campuses in Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. The college offers a variety of degrees (associate of arts, associate of science, associate of arts and science, and associate of applied science) and occupational and technical certificates.

Research Questions and Data Analysis

The researcher conducted all statistical analyses, which was computed with the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (Version 12.0 for Windows). Differences were analyzed statistically whenever possible using factor analysis, means, standard deviations, t-tests, and chi-squares depending on

the type of measurement, and the number of dependent variables in question or the type of question being asked determined the statistical test needed.

The following sub-sections details the researcher's questions explored in this study, including how the researcher investigated the question, what parts of the study that were used to answer each question, and the anticipated findings. Before each analysis was conducted, the researcher screened the data, checked for outliers, and ensured all respondents answered the question. Imputation was used to address the missing responses.

Research Question 1

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of engagement (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

The student-faculty interaction construct indicator was composed of seven survey items, the student support services construct indicator was composed of eleven survey items, and the institutional support for learners construct indicator was composed of seven survey items (see Appendix D). The extracurricular involvement and the academic preparation indicator dealt with the amount of time students' reported they were engaged in a particular activity (see Appendix D). Since extracurricular involvement and the academic preparation indicators were both time allotment responses, they were based on an additive scales.

To determine if student engagement differed significantly between students who participated in an orientation course and those who did not, the researcher factor analyzed each of the engagement indicator constructs (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, and institutional support) to ensure each of the survey measures was related and within acceptable limits of reliability. The use of support services yielded three factors and reduced the constructs from 11 to 10 (transfer center) for analysis. Extracurricular involvement and academic preparation required no factor analysis, as the survey items were single measures and based on additive scales.

To determine if students who participated in the orientation course differed significantly from students who did not participate in the orientation course on each of the student engagement indicator constructs and variables, means and standard deviations were calculated and examined. A two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* Tests was used for each (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation) to determine if significant differences existed between students who did and did not participate in the orientation course. Two-tailed findings indicate whether or not there existed a significant difference, and in what direction. That is, if the finding was found significant ($p < .05$), then the means of the dependent variable were examined to see if the two groups differed, and if students who participated in orientation had significantly higher levels of engagement. The larger the *t* value, the greater the probability that a statistically significant difference existed between the two groups of students (Popham & Sirotnik, 1992).

Research Question 2

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of satisfaction with relationships (peer, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices) and with the institution (overall educational experience) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

To determine if there were significant differences between the levels of satisfaction with relationships and with the institution, students who participated in an orientation course and those who had not were compared. Students ranked their satisfaction with the quality of peer, faculty and administrative personnel and offices relationships and with the institution (see Appendix D). Rankings were obtained as a single items measure for each; thus, satisfaction with relationships and with the institution were treated as separate items and explored individually.

Means and standard deviations were calculated and explored for the satisfaction with relationships by peers, faculty and administrative personnel and offices relationships. A two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* Test was used to determine if there were significant differences in students' reported levels of satisfaction with peers, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices. Means and standard deviations were calculated and explored with the overall satisfaction with the institution and entire learning experience and two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* Test was used to determine if there were significant differences in students' reported levels of satisfaction with the institution and entire learning experience.

Research Question 3

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of academic achievement (CGPA) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

To determine if there were significant differences between levels of academic achievement (cumulative college grade point average -- CGPA) between students who participated in an orientation course and those had not participated in an orientation course these groups were compared. Although Chee's et. al (2007) study was considered, this study recoded CCSSE's survey response scale categories to make the CGPA'S a continuous scale maintaining the following values: A (4.0 – 3.75), A- to B+ (3.74 - 3.25), B (3.24 – 2.75), B- to C+ (2.74 – 2.25), C (2.24 – 1.73), C- or lower (1.74 - .01), do not have a GPA at this school or pass/fail classes only (0). After recoding the data, mean values and standard deviations were calculated and explored. A two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* Test was used to determine if students who participated in orientation had significantly higher CGPAs than students who did not participate in an orientation course.

Research Question 4

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher rates of retention (intent to take classes at the institution again within the next 12 months) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

The retention survey item asked students when they would return to take classes at TCC again. The four-item response scale included the following: I will

accomplish my goal(s) this term and will not be returning; I have no current plan to return; within the next 12 months; and uncertain. Retention was defined in this study as students' intent to return to the institution within the next 12 months. Students who reported that they intended to return to the institution "within the next 12 months" were considered retained. Students who responded "I will accomplish my goal(s) this term and will not be returning," "I have no current plan to return," or "uncertain" were coded as non-retained.

To determine if there were significant differences between students who participated in an orientation course and those who had not and whether they were retained, student responses were dummy coded as non-retained (0) and retained (1). Since this retention variable was a single item measure, it was reported as a frequency (percentage). A chi-squared test was conducted for student retention to determine if the difference between students who participated in an orientation course and those who did not was significant.

Validity

Although the findings for this study may be useful to other institutions interested in implementing a similar orientation course or researching an existing one, the results of this study are limited. Fundamental to the interpretation and the ability to generalize the findings of this study are reliability and validity.

Generally, there are two types of validity with specific interest to this study – internal validity and external validity with instrumentation and selection bias most significant to this study.

Threats to internal validity actually limit the degree to which a researcher can conclude that the different subject or group outcomes (dependent variables) are due to the different treatments (independent variables). If alternative explanations for the different findings can be ruled out, the study is said to have good internal validity. As reviewed by Campbell and Stanley (1963), history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, selection bias, mortality, and selection-maturation interaction are all threats to internal validity. For this study, instrumentation and selection bias are those most of concern to the researcher.

Instrumentation is a threat to internal validity, as this threat deals primarily with the objectivity, reliability, and validity of the research measurements used on the CCSSR and the means of collecting the data. As previously discussed, the psychometric properties of the CCSSR has been explored extensively, demonstrating that the instrument was reliable and valid (Marti, 2006) and many of the CCSSR variables (content and construct validity) demonstrated solid relationships when validated against three separate data sources (McClenney & Marti, 2006). However, even though the CCSSR may be a valid instrument, respondents may not answer all the questions or they may respond dishonestly. Both of these instances threaten internal validity. Likewise, the administration of the survey can threaten internal validity, as each course presented with the survey must have standardized instructions for completing the survey. If there is variation in how the instructions are provided to the students responding to the survey, this may impact the internal validity. Thus, it is assumed that the TCC proctors were

provided with adequate training to maintain consistency in the administration of the survey to TCC students to control for this threat to internal validity.

Another concern is external validity that involves the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized or applied to other settings or people beyond the research setting and sample. Campbell and Stanley (1963) identified distinct factors that can adversely affect a study's external validity. As with internal validity, external validity can be verified through replication, as this study will attempt to determine if the findings for the four-year sector orientation participants are similar to that of community college students' experience.

External validity can be threatened when the sample for the study is not truly representative of the population. This has occurred frequently in educational research because convenience samples are used. The outcomes experienced by four-year students may not be directly generalizable to the two-year sector population and community college student outcomes found for an Eastern college may not directly apply to a community college on the West coast. The representativeness or external threats to validity described by Campbell and Stanley (1966) will be reviewed.

For this study, subjects were randomly selected from a population, as CCSSE randomly selects the courses to participate in the survey. Although the researcher lacks control over this external validity control, the researcher can ensure that the sample is representative of the population by screening student demographic data from TCC and comparing the sample to the population. Likewise, the researcher also recognizes that while the institution is significantly

large (over 35,000 students), the culture, climate, services, and personnel, faculty, and students present during the semester that the survey was administered may be very different from other significantly large community colleges. TCC is a large multi-campus public community college that serves regions within the Hampton Roads Virginia area. Located on the East Coast, the college serves over $\frac{1}{2}$ the regions students attending higher education.

Not all extraneous variables that threaten external validity can be controlled, but several are decreased through CCSSE controls (i.e., random course selections, multiple survey questions on identical topics, strict survey administration guidelines). External validity can be improved by appropriate sampling methods and having an adequate sample size, which reduces the probability of sampling error. For this study, random assignment of students to the orientation course was not possible; however, random sampling was used to determine on-campus sample participants from the population. The inability for the researcher to control for who took the course should be minimized by CCSSE's protocol of randomly selecting courses on all four TCC campuses to participate in this study. Based on recommendations by Myers et al. (2006), the total sample size should be approximately 10 subjects per variable in the study, especially if conducting a factor analysis (p. 467). For this study, over 1,300 responded to the question regarding participation in an orientation course, which according to Myers et al. (2006) represents an excellent sample size. Yet, care still must be taken with generalizing the results to other institutional environments.

As far as construct validity is concerned, the operational definitions of each of the constructs used in this study were based on the theoretical intent of the various engagement, satisfaction, achievement, and retention constructs (McClenney & Marti, 2006). Thus, each construct is based on valid measures, which intentionally measure the variable of interest. These valid measures were verified through a factor analysis of the survey items to ensure that the survey constructs measure the same factors. To obtain this information the researcher examined the correlation matrix for each of the constructs (engagement, satisfaction, achievement, and retention) explored.

Limitations

Although the official course description and specific course objectives have remained identical over the years at all VCCS institutions, the name of the course varied throughout the system until the fall semester of 2005 (Tighe, 2006). At TCC the course was titled “Orientation” until the 2004 catalog, in which the course title was changed to College Success Skills (the course description remained unchanged). This may indirectly impact the internal validity of the study and unintentionally, confuse respondents, as there is another question on the CCSSR that asks students if they have participated in a study skills course (question 8f). This is unlikely to occur, according to Aasen (personal communication, January 18, 2007), as “the orientation course was specific in nature for the objectives, as listed in the course description and students who participated in the CCSSR were likely to have taken the course prior to the course name change.”

Selection biases results from differential selection of respondents for the comparison groups. If the subject groups are nonequivalent at the beginning of the study, then any differences found between the outcomes (measures of the dependent variables) of the comparison groups (i.e., the control and experimental) groups are more likely to be attributed to the variables not controlled, rather than the treatment (independent variable). The sample for this study only includes community college students who completed the CCSSR during the spring semester of 2005. The study only examines community college students, not university or 4-year first-semester freshman college students. Since students self-select whether or not they participate and the researcher lacks control over the assignment of students to the orientation participation (independent variable) and the instructional format of the orientation course, internal validity can be improved by means of including the demographic variables in the analysis. This has been used by identifying students with similar control variables such as age, sex, and others (Stupka, 1986) to establish a more equivalent comparison and remove background differences that may account for any outcome differences found.

The CCSSR was a snapshot in time, and therefore, the description of student characteristics, as well as, engagement and satisfaction levels was based on the number and proportions of student subpopulations at the time of the survey. For example, the study sample only included students enrolled in an on-campus course at TCC during the spring semester of 2005. No online courses were included in the random sample of courses from which students were selected to participate in CCSSE. Since students who only take online courses were

eliminated, and this population may have different characteristics and unique experiences, findings cannot be generalized to online course community college students. Similarly, this extends to the other sub-groups considered off-campus.

Conclusions

With such a large body of research attesting to the effectiveness of the orientation course to improve engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention of college students, it is reasonable to predict that the CCSSR will capture the experiences and activities of the previously reviewed good practices. Through analysis of the variables previously established as positively associated with participation in orientation, this study employed the secondary data analysis method to assess the impact of participation in a community college orientation course on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention at TCC. This research attempts to bridge the gap in the research literature between what we know about student engagement and satisfaction and the relationship to desirable educational outcomes in the four-year sector as compared with the two-year students. Findings from this study can be used to inform institutional decision making regarding participation in orientation.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of this study exploring student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention for students based on their enrollment in an orientation course at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Virginia. As discussed in the previous chapter, this study uses a cross-sectional, static group comparison secondary data analysis approach to explore the research questions. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data used for this study came from the TCC spring 2005 Community College Student Report (CCSR).

This study has two main purposes: (1) to determine the impact of student participation in an orientation course taught at Tidewater Community College (TCC) on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention and (2) to compare the engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention rates of those students who participated in the TCC orientation course with those who have not participated in the TCC orientation course and determine if significant differences exist between the participants and non-participants in the course. Findings for each of these research questions are organized by responses to participation in the college orientation program or course (Question 8h) and each research question under study. This chapter summarizes the descriptive characteristics of the TCC sample, compared to the TCC population during the semester the survey was administered.

Description of the Sample

Of the 1316 student random sample included in the study, 777 were female (59%), and 478 were male (36.6%). Sixty-one students (4.6%) failed to indicate their

sex. More than one-half of the sample was 25 years old or older (59%), similar to TCC's average age of students, reported as 28.6. The majority of students (24.3%) self-reported CPGA as 3.75 average or better, while closely related 303 (23%) students reported ranges of .01 to 1.74 and 19.2% (253) students reported 2.75 CGPA.

Table 2

Demographic Comparison of Orientation Participants and Nonparticipants with TCC

Overall Spring 2005 Population

Demographic item	Orientation participants (n=636)		Orientation non-participants (n=680)		TCC spring 2005 population headcount (N=23,423)	
<i>Sex</i>						
Male	187	29.4%	291	42.8%	9333	40%
Female	410	64.5%	367	54%	14090	60%
No-response N=61, 4.6%	39	6.1%	22	3.2%	—	—
<i>Age</i>						
Traditional (24 years old & younger)	360	56.6%	371	54.6%	24372	10.4%
Non-traditional (25 old years & older)	232	36.4%	288	42.4%	3088	13.2%
No-response N=65, 4.9%	44	7%	21	3%	17898	76.4%
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Am. Indian/Other Native Am.	10	1.6%	7	1%	132	.01%

Asian, Asian Am./Pacific Islander	49	7.7%	59	8.7%	1231	.05%
Native Hawaiian	1	.1%	3	.4%	0	0%
Black, African Am., Non- Hispanic	157	24.7%	145	21.3%	7287	31%
White, Non-Hispanic	319	50.2%	387	57%	13404	57.2%
Hispanic, Latino, Span.	32	5%	21	3%	1004	.04%
Other	24	3.8%	27	4%	365	.02%
No-response N=75, 5.7%	44	6.9%	31	4.6%	1	.004%
<hr/> <i>Attendance</i>						
Full-time	392	62%	374	55%	7349	31%
Less than futime	244	38%	305	44.9%	16074	69%
No-response	0	0%	1	.1%	-	-
<hr/> <i>Parental education</i>						
1 st generation student	305	48%	318	47%	-	-
Not 1 st generation student	231	36%	273	40%	-	-
Unknown	100	16%	89	13%	-	-

Table 2 presents the overall student demographics for the respondents based on participation in the orientation course, as well as the demographics for all the students enrolled at TCC during the same semester that the survey was administered on campus (23,423 total students enrolled spring semester of 2005). However, the total number of students enrolled during that semester includes students who were not included in the random sample selected by CCSSE (i.e. dual enrollment (682 students)). Items with dashes were not measured in Table 2. Originally, a chi-squared

analysis was planned to determine if there were significant differences between the TCC population and the sample population; however, since the CCSR sample was also included in the overall TCC population, only the frequency percentages were presented to ensure a representative sample.

When reviewing Table 2 to determine if the sample was representative of the population, several variables were very close in percentages during the enrollment for spring 2005 semester. There were more females overall than males. Across the board the ethnicity variable seemed fairly consistent with the sample with a few minor differences (such as Asian, Asian Am./Pacific Islander with almost 8% in the sample and less than 1% in the population), otherwise the sample was fairly representative on ethnicity.

As for differences noted, more traditional (24 years & younger) students participated in the survey (over 50%) than did non-traditional students; however, over 75% of TCC's respondents failed to provide birth date information in order for the researcher to accurately assess this variable. This significant difference could be attributed to the high percentage of students enrolled in dual enrollment courses that were not included in the sample. Major differences were observed in students' attendance. The majority of whom (55% and 62%) of the students in the sample reported that they were full-time, while the TCC population only enrolled 31% full-time during the spring of 2005. Again, this may be due to the sample, as several sub-groups of students were not included in the sample. Parental education was not obtainable from TCC's database to compare to the sample.

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, several student sub-groups included in TCC's overall student enrollment for the spring 2005 semester were not included in CCSSE's random sample selection criteria (i.e. distance education courses, dual enrollment, etc.). Thus, the random sample only applies to courses taught on all campuses, during varying times of the day, for various programs of study. This sample was not a truly representative sample of TCC's student body and limits generalizability of the results. Regardless, the results presented in this chapter provide information on the impact of orientation courses on the success and engagement of students at TCC.

Analysis of Research Question One

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of engagement (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, institutional support, extracurricular involvement, and academic preparation) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

To determine if student engagement differed significantly between students who participated in an orientation course and those who did not, the researcher factor analyzed each of the engagement indicator constructs (student-faculty interaction, use of support services, and institutional support) to ensure each of the survey measures was related and within acceptable limits of reliability. To evaluate the internal consistency of the CCSSR questions regarding student engagement, Cronbach's alphas were computed for the engagement scales that measured the student-faculty interaction, use of support services, and institutional support constructs under study.

All the values for the engagement coefficient alphas were within acceptable limits of reliability and are reported under each engagement section within this chapter. Each of the engagement scales that measured the student-faculty interaction, use of support services, and institutional support was reduced into a single measure for analysis. The student variables of extracurricular involvement and academic preparation required no factor analysis, as the survey items were single measures and based on additive scales. Findings are presented in each engagement section for each research question.

Student-Faculty Interaction

The student-faculty interaction engagement indicators were comprised of seven survey items. Each indicator was ranked on a four-item response scale. The response scale maintained the following point values: Never (1), Sometimes (2), Often (3), and Very Often (4).

The factor analysis for student-faculty interaction yielded only one initial eigenvalue over one point (2.52). This eigenvalue indicated that the total variance between the discriminating constructs, which accounted for 36% of the variance between the other constructs used to measure student-faculty interaction. Thus, the student-faculty interaction engagement variable was evaluated on a single scale using the Principle Component Analysis. Cronbach's alphas were computed to evaluate the internal consistency of the CCSSR questions regarding student-faculty engagement, which had acceptable reliability limits (see Table 3).

Table 3

Properties of the Student Engagement Scale Measuring Student-Faculty Interaction

Measures	<i>M</i>	Alpha Reliability
<i>Student-faculty interaction</i>	2.13	.69
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions		
Used email to communicate with an instructor		
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor		
Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor		
Discussed ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class		
Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance		
Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework		

Based on the consistency of the items as indicated by the acceptable Cronbach's Alpha, a student-faculty engagement scale was created. Table 4 presents the comparison results between participation in orientation and the engagement scale.

Table 4

Comparison of Student-Faculty Engagement Overall Mean

Measure	Orientation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SD Error
	participation				Mean
Student-faculty interaction	No-participation	680	2.0626	.46718	.841
	Participation	636	2.2103	.49458	.833

The overall means for student-faculty engagement differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not show slight differences. Students who participated in orientation (636) overall interacted more with faculty ($M = 2.21$, $SD = .50$) than students who did not (680) participate in orientation ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .47$). To determine if the mean difference was significant between students who participated in orientation and those who did not, a two-tailed Independent-Samples t test was conducted. Table 5 illustrates the difference between the mean values calculated for student-faculty interaction engagement. On the measure for student-faculty interaction the two-tailed Independent-Samples t test was significant $t(1316) = -5.571$, $p = .000$). On the average, orientation participants ($M = 2.21$, $SD = .50$) interacted more with faculty than students who did not participate in orientation ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .47$).

Table 5

T-Tests on Student Engagement Indicator: Student-Faculty Interaction

Measure	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Student-faculty interaction</i>	-5.571	1314	.000*

* $p < .05$ *Use of Student Support Services*

The student support services construct indicator was comprised of eleven survey items that used a four-item frequency response scale. The response scale maintained the following point values: Don't Know/N.A. (0), Rarely/Never (1), Sometimes (2), and Often (3). The student services items included on the CCSSR included the following: academic advising/planning, career counseling, job placement assistance, peer or other tutoring, skill labs (writing, math, etc.), child care, financial aid advising, computer lab, student organizations, transfer credit assistance, and services to students with disabilities.

A reliability analysis was first conducted to ensure the constructs under investigation were related using Principle Axis Factoring. The rotated analysis indicated there were three significant components for use of support services. The 11 constructs were reduced to 3 scales and Cronbach's Alpha's were computed and indicating acceptable reliability limits (Table 6).

Table 6

Properties of the Student Engagement Use of Support Services Scales

Use Measures - 3 Scales	Mean	Alpha Reliability
Scale 1: Use of student services	.56	.73
Services to students with disabilities		
Child care		
Job placement assistance		
Student organizations		
Scale 2: Use of academic services	1.31	.65
Peer or other tutoring		
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)		
Financial aid advising		
Computer lab		
Scale 3: Use of career and academic advising	1.33	.88
Academic advising/planning		
Career counseling		

As illustrated in Table 6, the means were calculated based on the scales from the factor analysis. Scale 1 had 4 items (services to students with disabilities, child care, job placement assistance, and student organizations). Scale 2 also had 4 items (peer or other tutoring, skill labs (writing, math, etc.), financial aid advising, and

computer lab. Scale 3 only had two items academic advising/planning and career counseling, as one was deleted (transfer center) during the factor analysis.

Table 7 illustrates the overall mean for Scale 1 -- use of support services engagement. The overall mean revealed only slight differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. The means measured use of disability services, child care, job placement assistance, and student organizations.

Table 7

Comparison of Use of Student Support Services Engagement Scale 1 Overall Mean

		<i>SD</i>			
Orientation participation		<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Error Mean
Scale 1 - Use of student services	No-participation	680	.4944	.53590	.02055
	Participation	636	.5013	.52485	.02081

Table 7 illustrates the overall mean for measuring the use of student services. The comparative means revealed no significant differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Students who participated in orientation (636) overall used the support services at basically the same rate ($M = .50$, $SD = .53$) as students who did not (680) participate in orientation ($M = .49$, $SD = .54$).

Table 8 illustrates the overall mean for Scale 2 – use of academic services for use of support services engagement. The overall mean revealed differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. The mean differences

measuring use of peer or other tutoring, skill labs, financial aid advising, and computer lab appear significant (.25 point mean score difference).

Table 8

Comparison of Use of Student Support Services Engagement Scale 2 Overall Mean

					SD
	Orientation participation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Error Mean
Scale 2 – use of academic services	No-participation	680	1.1979	.66976	.02568
	Participation	636	1.4475	.65946	.02615

Table 8 illustrates the overall mean for Scale 2 – use of academic services. The comparison revealed differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Students who participated in orientation (636) overall had significantly higher engagement with Scale 2 services ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .66$) than students who did not (680) participate in orientation ($M = 1.20$, $SD = .67$). Table 9 illustrates the overall mean for Scale 3 – use of career and academic advising. The overall mean revealed differences between orientation participants and non-participants. The mean differences measuring use of academic advising/planning and career counseling appear significant (.21 point mean score difference).

Table 9

Comparison of Use of Student Support Services Engagement Scale 3 Overall Mean

	Orientation participation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SD Error Mean
Scale 3 – use of career and academic advising	No-participation	680	1.0466	.76746	.02943
	Participation	636	1.2578	.80272	.03183

Table 9 illustrates the overall mean measuring the use of academic advising/planning and career counseling for Scale 3. This Scale revealed differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Orientation participants (636) overall were more engaged in academic advising/planning and career counseling ($M = 1.26$, $SD = .80$) than the 680 orientation non-participants ($M = 1.05$, $SD = .77$).

To determine if the means of Scale 1, Scale 2, and Scale 3 were significant, a two-tailed Independent-Samples t test was conducted. Each Scale highlights the support services in which the students were engaged and were included in each particular Scale. The results for each engagement Scale are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

T-Tests on Student Engagement Indicator Constructs for Use of Support Services

Use Measures - 3 Scales	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
Scale 1: Use of student services	-.235	1314	.815
Services to students with disabilities			
Child care			
Job placement assistance			
Student organizations			
Scale 2: Use of academic services	-6.807	1314	.000*
Peer or other tutoring			
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)			
Financial aid advising			
Computer lab			
Scale 3: Use of career and academic advising	-4.873	1297.790	.000*
Academic advising/planning			
Career counseling			

* $p < .05$

On the Scale 3 measures for use of student support services engagement, the two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* test was significant for two of the three scales. Scale 1, which included services to students with disabilities, child care, job placement assistance, and student organizations was found not significant when students who participated in orientation were compared to students who did not $t(1316) = -.24, p = .82$.

Scale 2, which included peer or other tutoring, skill labs (writing, math, etc.), financial aid advising, and computer lab engagement was significant $t(1316) = -6.81$, $p = .000$. Students in Scale 2 who participated in orientation ($M = 1.15$, $SD = .66$) reported using the institutional support services significantly more than those students who did not participate in orientation ($M = 1.20$, $SD = .67$). Overall, students who participated in orientation reported using peer or other tutoring, skill labs, financial aid advising, and computer lab “rarely or never,” more than students who did not participate in orientation.

Means also significantly differed between orientation participants and non-participants on the measure for use of student support services engagement for Scale 3, $t(1316) = 4.87$, $p = .000$. Students in Scale 3 who participated in orientation engaged more in academic advising/planning and career counseling ($M = 1.25$, $SD = .80$) and ($M = 1.05$, $SD = .77$) for those students who did not participate in orientation. Overall, indicating that students who participated in orientation were on average more likely to use student support services than students who did not participate in orientation. This is especially true, as orientation participants were more engaged and used the following support services more than non-participants: peer or other tutoring; skill labs (writing, math, etc.); financial aid advising; computer lab; academic advising/planning; and career counseling.

Institutional Support

The institutional support for learners construct indicator was composed of seven survey items that used a four item response scale. The response scale maintained the following point values: Very little (1), Some (2), Quite a bit (3), and

Very much (4). The college opinion items included on the CCSSR included the following: encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying, providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college, encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds, helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.), providing the support you need to thrive socially, providing the financial support you need to afford your education, and using computers in academic work.

To evaluate the internal consistency of the institutional support constructs under study questions regarding student engagement, Cronbach's alphas were computed. Values for the engagement coefficient alphas had within acceptable limits of reliability. Table 11 illustrates those values.

Table 11

Properties of the Student Engagement Scale for Institutional Support for Learners

	Mean	Alpha Reliability
Overall Institutional Support		
Encourage you to spend significant amounts of time studying	2.44	.84
Providing support you need to help you succeed at this college		
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds		
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities		
Providing the support you need to thrive socially		
Providing the financial support need to afford your education		

Using computers in academic work

This question on the CCSSR illustrated the students' perception of the intuitional efforts to support, encourage, and help them as learners. The students' rankings of engagement with institutional support may make the difference in whether or not a student associates with a specific activity or feels connected to an institution to invest time, energy, and ultimately commit to persist at the same institution. Table 12 illustrates the institutional support comparison ranking of overall means between orientation participants and non-participants.

Table 12

Comparison of Institutional Support Engagement Overall Mean

Measure	Orientation	N	Mean	SD	SD Error
	participation				Mean
Institutional Support	No-participation	680	2.4054	.63285	.02427
	Participation	636	2.6142	.63211	.02427

This comparison revealed differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Students who participated in orientation overall engaged more with institutional support ($M = 2.61$, $SD = .63$) than students who did not participate in orientation ($M = 2.41$, $SD = .63$). To determine if orientation participants and nonparticipants differed significantly for institutional support for learners, the researcher used a two-tailed Independent-Samples t Test (see Table 13). Mean values were compared.

Table 13

T-Tests on Student Engagement: Institutional Support

Construct Measures	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
Institutional support	-5.984	1314	.000*

* $p < .05$

The two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* Test results for student engagement in institutional support for learners, the test was significant $t(1316) = -5.98, p = .000$. Although the Alpha level was high, there were significant differences found between the students' level of engagement and perceptions of institutional support.

Extracurricular Involvement

The extracurricular involvement indicator dealt with the amount of time students' reported participating in college-sponsored activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.). This survey item used a six-item response scale based on the amount of time students spend engaged in the extracurricular activity (None, 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-20 hours, 21-30 hours, More than 30 hours). The response scale was created into an additive scale with the following point values: none (0), 1-5 hours (1), 6-10 hours (2), 11-20 hours (3), 21-30 hours (4), more than 30 hours (5). To determine if there were differences between orientation participants and non-participants with engagement in extracurricular activities, overall mean values were calculated (see Table 14).

Table 14

Comparison of Extracurricular Activities Engagement Overall Mean

Measure	Orientation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SD Error
	participation				Mean
Extracurricular activities	No-participation	680	.15	.495	.019
	Participation	636	.17	.501	.020

The overall mean measuring engagement in extracurricular activities based on orientation participation. This comparison of means revealed the slight differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Students who participated in orientation (636) overall had engaged in extracurricular activities slightly more ($M = .17$, $SD = .50$) than students who did not (680) participate in orientation ($M = .15$, $SD = .05$).

A two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* test was performed on the additive scale means to determine significant differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Although the literature is mixed concerning community college students' engagement in extracurricular activities (Anderson, 2005; Blowers, 2005; Cook, et al., 2003; Kuh et al., 2006; Siddle & McReynolds, 1999; Tobolowsky, 2005; Ward, 2005), the question was included to determine if the Virginia orientation made an impact in this area, similar to the four- year institutions.

Table 15

T-Tests on Student Engagement in Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular Involvement	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
Amount of time	-.686	1314	.493

$p < .05$

On the measure for student engagement in extracurricular activities, the test was not significant, $t(1316) = -.69$, $p = .49$.

Academic Preparation

The academic preparation indicator dealt with the total number of hours respondents estimated they spent preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program). This survey item used a six-item response scale with the respective additive scale following point values: None (0), 1-5 hours (1), 6-10 hours (2), 11-20 hours (3), 21-30 hours (4), More than 30 hours (5). Table 16 presents the results.

Table 16

Comparison of Academic Preparation Engagement Overall Mean

Measure	Orientation participation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SD Error Mean
Academic Preparation	No-participation	680	1.82	1.051	.040
	Participation	636	1.92	1.058	.042

A difference did exist between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Students orientation participants overall on average spent more time preparing for class ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.06$) than students who did not participate in orientation ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.05$). Students spent over 3 hours preparing for class, with orientation participants spending more time preparing for class.

A two-tailed Independent-Samples t test was performed on the additive scale mean to determine if this difference was significant between students who participated in orientation and those who did not for the academic preparation engagement. The test indicated whether or not a significant difference existed between orientation participants and non-participants in the total number of hours students spent preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to their program). Table 17 presents the results.

Table 17

T-Tests on Student Engagement in Academic Preparation Activities

Academic Preparation	t	df	P
Amount of time	-1.616	1314	.106

$p < .05$

On the measure for student engagement in academic preparation activities, the test was not significant, $t(1316) = -1.62$, $p = .106$.

Analysis of Research Question Two

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of satisfaction with relationships (peer, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices) and with the institution (overall educational experience) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

Levels of student satisfaction were compared to determine if significant differences between students who participated in an orientation course and those who had not. The levels of satisfaction compared were the levels of satisfaction with relationships (peer, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices) and with the institution (overall educational experience). Students ranked their satisfaction with the quality of peer, faculty and administrative personnel and offices. These relationship satisfaction scales used the following seven-item response scale: (1) Extremely Poor; (2) Very Poor; (3) Poor; (4) Neutral; (5) Good; (6) Very Good; and (7) Extremely Good), with point values respectively. Satisfaction with relationships was obtained as a single item measure for each, peers, faculty members and administrative personnel and offices, and were treated as separate items and explored individually. This was true for satisfaction with the institution also.

Means were calculated for each of the variables under investigation and included in Table 18. A two-tailed Independent-Samples *t* Tests was used to determine if there were significant differences in students' reported levels of satisfaction with peers, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices between those who participated in orientation and those who did not (see Table 19).

Table 18

*Comparison of Student Satisfaction with Peers, Faculty, and Administrative**Personnel Offices Overall Mean*

Satisfaction Measure	Orientation	N	Mean	SD	SD Error
	participation				Mean
Peers	No-participation	680	5.30	1.322	.051
	Participation	636	5.43	1.358	.054
Faculty	No-participation	680	5.51	1.27.0	.049
	Participation	636	5.50	1.274	.051
Administrative	No-participation	680	4.65	1.550	.059
Personnel/Offices	Participation	636	4.72	1.563	.062

A difference did exist between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Both students who participated in orientation (636) and those who did not ranked the level of satisfaction with peers and faculty as “good.” Students who participated in orientation had on average experienced more satisfaction with administrative personnel and offices ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.56$) than students who did not participate in orientation ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 1.55$). Perhaps, the orientation course educated the students about where to go for help on campus and which personnel and administrative offices handled particular issues. This could account for higher levels of satisfaction with relationships with peers, faculty members, and administrative personnel and offices.

To determine if significant differences between student satisfaction with peers, faculty, and administrative personnel and offices existed, a two-tailed Independent-Samples t test was conducted. A separate analysis was conducted for satisfaction with the overall educational experience.

Table 19

T-Tests on Student Satisfaction with Peers, Faculty, and Administrative Personnel and Offices

Student Satisfaction	t	df	P
Peers	1.668	1314	.096
Faculty	-.255	1314	.798
Administrative Personnel and Offices	.794	1314	.427

$p < .05$

For the measures for student satisfaction with peers, faculty and administrative personnel and offices relationships, the tests was not significant. For student satisfaction with peers the test revealed $t(1316) = 1.67, p = .10$. For student satisfaction with faculty the test revealed $t(1316) = -.255, p = .80$, and the test for student satisfaction with administrative personnel and offices revealed $t(1316) = .79, p = .43$.

Although there was not a significant difference between students who participated in orientation and those who did not, both groups perceived their relationships with peers and faculty as good (score of 5). Yet, on the students'

perception of their relationship with administrative personnel and offices, both orientation participants and non participants ranked the relationships as neutral (score of 4). On average, students appear to get along better with their peers and faculty than they do with the administrative personnel and offices.

The overall satisfaction with the institution indicator was a single survey item that measured the satisfaction with the entire educational experience at this college on a four response scale. The satisfaction with the overall college experience response scale maintained the following point values: Poor (1), Fair (2), Good (3), and Excellent (4). Overall mean values were calculated (see Table 20) to determine if differences between orientation participants and non-participants existed.

Table 20

Comparison of Overall Satisfaction with the Institution Overall Mean

Satisfaction Measure	Orientation participation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SD Error Mean
Entire educational experience at TCC	No-participation	680	3.13	.641	.025
	Participation	636	3.13	.649	.026

The overall mean measuring the overall satisfaction with the institution revealed no differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. Both students who participated in orientation (636) and those who did not (680) participate in orientation overall felt the entire educational experience was

“good” ($M = 3.13$), with slight differences in the SD , .65 and .64 respectively. Based on the point values this appears to be great news to TCC. Although good news, this is perplexing that there were no differences noted based on previous research.

Although the mean values were identical for the orientation participants and the non-participants, as illustrated in Table 20, a two-tailed Independent-Samples t Tests was conducted. This test was used to further confirm no significant differences in respondents’ reported levels of overall satisfaction with the educational experience existed between orientation participants and those who did.

Table 21

T-Tests on Students’ Overall Satisfaction with Institution and Educational Experience

Student Satisfaction	t	df	P
Entire educational experience	.175	1314	.861
$p < .05$			

For the measure for student satisfaction with the institution and entire educational experience at TCC, the tests was not significant $t(1316) = .175, p = .86$. The test indicated no significant difference between orientation participants and non-participants with satisfaction with the entire educational experience and institution. Both groups perceived the experience as a positive one. Both orientation participants and non-participants indicated satisfaction (scores of 3 – “good”) with the institution and entire educational experience.

Analysis of Research Question Three

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher levels of academic achievement (CGPA) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

To determine if there were differences in levels of academic achievement (cumulative grade point average -- CGPA) between orientation participants and non-participants, CGPA's were compared. This survey item was based on the following response scale categories: A, A- to B+, B, B- to C+, C, C- or lower, do not have a GPA at this school, or pass/fail classes only. As in the Chee et. al (2007) study, each letter grade average on this scale was recoded to make the CGPA'S a continuous scale maintaining the following values: A (4.0 – 3.75), A- to B+ (3.74 - 3.25), B (3.24 – 2.75), B- to C+ (2.74 – 2.25), C (2.24 – 1.73), C- or lower (1.74 - .01), do not have a GPA at this school or pass/fail classes only (0).

After recoding the data, groups of students were eliminated from this sample to determine the overall true mean score for participants and non-participants in orientation. Groups that could confound analysis were removed: non-responders, no GPA at this school, and students in pass/fail classes only. This was also done because actual student records could not be linked to surveys, as the student surveys were anonymous -- these issues are limitations to the study.

For this study, fifty-one (3.9%) incomplete total surveys questions were eliminated due to non-response. There were 19 (.02%) surveys questions eliminated due to students reporting that they were in pass/fail classes only and 47 (.04%) were due to students reporting that they had no GPA at this School, leaving 1199 for total

sample for the CGPA question (3.96% total removed). Table 22 illustrates the overall mean for academic achievement (CGPA). The overall mean revealed differences between orientation participants and non-participants. The mean differences measuring CGPA appear significant (.19 point).

Table 22

Comparison of Academic Achievement (CGPA) Overall Mean

Measure academic achievement	Orientation participation	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SD Error Mean
CGPA	No-participation	619	6.27	1.309	.053
	Participation	580	6.08	1.264	.052

This overall mean comparison revealed differences between students who participated in orientation and those who did not. With the students removed who either did not respond to this question, have a CGPA at this school, or were in pass/fail classes only that do not issue letter grades to impact CGPA, the total numbers of students who participated in orientation dropped almost 56 total students. The total number of non-participants dropped 61 total students. Orientation participants (580) had a lower overall mean average ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.26$) than the 619 orientation non-participants ($M = 6.27$, $SD = 1.31$). Overall, both groups of students indicated CGPA within the range of B (3.29 – 2.71). Orientation non-participants on average reported higher CGPA than orientation participants.

To determine if the overall CGPA means between orientation participants and non-participants were significant, a two-tailed Independent-Samples t test was conducted (see Table 23). Students at TCC who participated in an orientation course do not have significantly higher levels of academic achievement (CGPA) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course.

Table 23

T-Tests on Student Overall CGPA

Measure	t	df	P
Student CGPA	2.556	1197	.011*

$P^* < .05$

As illustrated on Table 23 on the measure for CGPA, the test was significant, $t(1199) = 2.56$, $p = .01$. Interestingly, students who participated in orientation on the average reported having *lower* CGPA ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.26$), than students who did not participate in orientation ($M = 6.27$, $SD = 1.31$). This indicates a number of conclusions that could be drawn from this finding, as it is not consistent with the majority of literature reviewed. This will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Analysis of Research Question Four

Do students at TCC who participated in an orientation course have significantly higher rates of retention (intent to take classes at the institution again within the next 12 months) than students at TCC who have not participated in an orientation course?

The retention-related survey item asked students when they would return to take classes at TCC again. The four-item response scale included the following: I will accomplish my goal(s) this term and will not be returning; I have no current plan to return; within the next 12 months; and uncertain. Retention was defined in this study as students' intent to return to the institution within the next 12 months. Students who reported that they intended to return to the institution "within the next 12 months" were coded retained (1) and students who responded "I will accomplish my goal this term and will not be returning," I have no current plan to return or "uncertain" were coded as non-retained (0).

To determine if significant differences between students who participated in an orientation course and those who had not and whether they were retained, student responses were dummy coded as non-retained (0) and retained (1). To determine if the difference was significantly higher for students who participated in an orientation course and those who had not, a contingency table analysis with a chi-squared (χ^2) test of independence was conducted, as illustrated in Table 24. On the measure for retention of students, the Pearson Chi-Squared test was selected because students were in a specific category and the variable was not continuous a measure.

Table 24

Student Retention Pearson Chi-Square Test

Measure	Value	Df	Asymp Sig (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.309	2	.010 *
Likelihood Ratio	9.399	2	.009

Linear-by Linear Association	3.241	1	.072
N of Valid Cases	1316		

* $p < .05$

When students were coded as non-returners and compared to those who enrolled in the orientation course, “planned to return within the next 12 months,” as retained, the test was significant. Out of the 466 students who did not participate in orientation, 51% indicated that they planned to return within the next 12 months. Out of the 452 students who did participate in orientation, 49% indicated that they also planned to return to the institution within the next 12 months. Therefore, it appears that orientation participation does not significantly increase the chance of students returning (being retained) at the community college.

Equally, 65 both orientation participants and non-participants accomplished their goal and planned not to return (130 students). Of the 19 who participated in orientation and the 35 who did not (54 total), both planned not to return. This is not a surprising finding given that students do not enroll after they complete their educational goal.

Summary

Overall, students who participated in the orientation course had significantly higher levels of engagement and satisfaction with relationships. Orientation participants had higher levels of engagement with faculty, use of support services (especially, tutoring, skill labs, financial and academic advising, computer lab, and career counseling), and institutional support.

Levels of satisfaction with peers, faculty and administrative personnel and offices were not significantly higher for those students who participated in orientation. The same was true for most levels of satisfaction with the institution and the entire educational experience. Students who participated in orientation had almost identical levels of satisfaction in both cases, regardless of participation in orientation.

Interestingly, students who participated in orientation had significantly lower levels of academic achievement (CGPA) than students who did not participate in orientation. In fact, the findings indicated the students who did not participate in orientation achieved higher levels of academic success with greater CGPA's.

When reviewing retention, the results of this study were significant when comparing participants and non-participants of orientation. In fact, not only were the results significant, they were also very close. Out of the non-participants, 51% indicated that they planned to return within the next 12 months. Out of the participants, 49% indicated that they also planned to return to the institution within the next 12 months. Additionally, TCC provided what students needed to accomplish students' goal for 130 students, all of which met their goal and had not plans to return to the College. Of these students, 65 students participated in orientation.

The next section, Chapter Five, provides an interpretation of these findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future practice and research. An overview of the study is also provided.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This study had two main purposes: (1) to determine the impact of student participation in an orientation course taught at Tidewater Community College (TCC) had on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention and (2) to compare the engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention rates of those students who participated in the TCC orientation course with those who have not participated in the TCC orientation course, to determine if there existed significant differences between the participants and non-participants in the course, and (3) to generate baseline data for the VCCS on student participation in orientation.

Since little research has been done to illustrate the value of student orientation at community colleges (Cook et al., 2003), this research will create baseline data on this topic. As Barefoot and Gardner (1993) stated, student outcomes, intentionally impacted by freshman orientation should be evaluated, reported, and shared. With the majority of empirical studies concerning student academic achievement and retention directed at four-year institutions at the undergraduate and graduate levels, there was a need to contribute to the higher education literature and study community college students. As Bailey and Alfonso (2005) emphasized:

Research about and at community colleges must play a central role in any strategy to increase student success.... The large majority of the research on program effectiveness in higher education is limited to studies of 4-year

colleges.... The lack of research on community colleges is a particularly serious problem (p. 12).

Clearly, minimal research on community college students only comprises a small fraction of the total higher education literature (Townsend et al., 2004). Considering the increased demand for, and enrollment in, community college courses, this minimal research and interest is particularly disconcerting (American Association of Community Colleges, 2007), and this study was a beginning approach to bridge the gap identified in the literature review.

In general, the overall findings yielded significant results in terms of student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention at the community college level. That is, there was a clear relationship between some of the variables tested and orientation participation. First, on the average, orientation participants interacted more with faculty than students who did not participate in orientation. This study found that students who participated in orientation were significantly more likely to use peer or other tutoring, skill labs (writing, math, etc.), financial aid advising, computer lab, academic advising/planning, and career counseling. However, use of services to students with disabilities, child care (which TCC does not have), job placement assistance, and student organizations was not found significant for students who participated in orientation. As for the participation in the support services and some of the engagement measures, it should be considered that most students attending community colleges work. In fact for this sample, for those who participated in orientation most of the students in this sample were more likely to work full-time (58.2%), be female (68.7), and non-traditional (60.8%), mainly seeking

an Associate degree as their primary goal. As working and family responsibilities are only some of the many non-academic commitments students have outside of school, they conflict with the time they have available to engage in many of the items measured, unlike many of the tasks four-year students face; thus explaining the differences noted between four-year findings and that of this study.

Secondly, this study found significant results for the measure of institutional support - student engagement. Students who participated in orientation reported that the institution encouraged them to spend significant amounts of time studying, offered the support services needed for success at this college, encouraged contact with students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds to expand appreciation of their peers. These are some of the primary objectives in the orientation course (Tighe, 2006). Based on point values, this equates to spending less than one hour a week engaged in an extracurricular activity for both groups of orientation participants and non-participants. Although these were found not significant, both groups reported spending over 3 hours a week preparing for and studying for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to their program).

On the measure for student satisfaction, students appear to get along better with their peers and faculty than they do with the administrative personnel and offices, regardless of participation in orientation. Although the test results for student satisfaction with the institution and entire educational experience was not significant, both orientation participants and non-participants indicated satisfaction as “good” with the entire educational experience.

As for the test, the CGPA test results, the findings were significant. Students who participated in orientation on the average reported having *lower* CGPA than students who did not participate in orientation. This finding supports Bolender (1994); yet, does not support those of previous researchers (Boylan, 1983; Folger et al., 2004; Jackson, 2005; Strumpf & Hunt, 1993). Academic achievement data should be considered based on admission standards of the institution as well as the policy that does not limit when the student must take the course. A possible explanation for this finding, in conflict with other findings at four-year institutions, is that higher achieving students may feel they do not need the course, thus do not enroll. And lastly, retention of students was found significant for those who participated in orientation.

Recommendations

There are two types of recommendations emanating from this research. First, there are recommendations for further research. Second, there are recommendations for practice based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although this research study was on one community college sample, the researcher believes it offers an important contribution to the gap in the community college research literature, and to the recent concerns of community college student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention. Although not all the findings of this study were significant, the overall data seem to support the value of participation in an orientation course as a contributing factor of student success.

While many areas for future research have been identified in the literature, support for

participation in an orientation course or program was also found by this study. After reviewing and analyzing the data, the researcher suggests that the following future research be considered:

1. Replication of this study with other community colleges.
2. Replication of this study using added measures such as student demographics, socio-economic status, first generation versus non-first generation students, etc.
3. Replication of this study comparing on-campus versus on-line students.
4. Replication of this study controlling for selection bias.
5. Developing a longitudinal study comparing course participation and non-participation using CCSSE data collected over several time periods.
6. Replication of this study examining non-response bias.
7. Replication of this study using regression analysis to determine factors most impacting retention of TCC students.

The CCSR was a snapshot in time, and therefore, the descriptions of student characteristics, as well as, the results were based on the number and proportions of student subpopulations at the time of the survey. For example, the study sample only included students enrolled in an on-campus course at TCC during the spring semester of 2005. TCC is an on-going participant in the Community College Survey Student Engagement (CCSSE). Perhaps different time periods would result in unique student characteristics. It is recommended that future research consider expanding study

findings on the variables included in this study. As with internal validity, external validity can be verified through replication, findings for the 4-year sector orientation participants could be found more similar to that of community college students' experience if all community college students were included in the random sample selection for participation in the study (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

As a result, the course objectives, student participation, and needs assessment of the orientation programs is highly recommended, not only for TCC, but also for the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) as a whole. Mullendore, Miller, and Busby (2003) recommend evaluating and assessing current orientation programs would also be recommended for further study, especially using specific standards such as the Council for the Advancement of Standards of Higher Education (CAS) and using Cuseo's (1991) report for guiding administrative decisions regarding delivery and course content.

Cook et al. (2003) also summarizes the orientation offerings and best practices of 100 community colleges across the nation. Not only do they highlight the challenges professionals face with regards to designing and implementing orientation programs because of the tremendous student diversity, they also call for more research. This researcher echoes those recommendations.

It is further suggested, since more and more orientation courses are offered in various instructional delivery formats, that online orientation be considered for further study. This research did not include any online courses. Since offering online courses through distance education has become a viable alternative to face-to-face instruction by increasing student access, student outcomes remain unknown (Tighe, 2006).

Overall, as evidenced by the literature review on student outcomes associated with college orientation, many studies have documented the impact of student participation in such programming and several student demographic variables have been noted directly related to academic achievement, retention, and persistence for traditional on-campus orientation. As noted above, a gap in the research literature remains concerning new student orientation offered at community colleges (Cook et al., 2003). Such research on community colleges is called for, particularly when considering the increased community college enrollment. The wide-spread use of technological methods to assist with new student orientation (Tighe, 2006; Tobolowsky, 2005; Upcraft, 2003) also seems to create a need for further research in this area.

All of the documented findings are important to postsecondary administrators, and community college student outcomes need further exploration, especially the academic achievement, retention, and persistence of students who complete orientations online (McKay, 2003). Since the introduction of online orientation is fairly new to higher education, the empirical research concerning student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, retention, and persistence remain unknown for online orientation. Thus, as the demand for institutions to offer more courses through distance technology delivery formats increases, and the increased use of distance technology to assist with new student orientation increases (Kramer, 2003; Tobolowsky, 2005; Upcraft, 2003), further investigation of student outcomes for online orientation is needed to determine the equivalence of distance orientation courses to their on-campus counterparts (Allen & Seaman, 2004).

Practice

Although the call for more community college research has been made clear by numerous researchers (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998; Wild & Ebers, 2002), the challenges community colleges face when studying retention of their students concerns two elements: how retention is defined and the pattern of student attendance. Thus, community colleges must evaluate how they define a “retained” student and investigate further the enrollment patterns of their students. Wild and Ebers (2002), suggest that community colleges re-evaluate how they are currently assessing student retention. Reliance on four-year college and university standards of retention may not prove useful to community college administrators and may further delay our understanding community college student retention.

Additionally, the diversity of the community college student body must be considered (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005) when making any assessment of services provided and the impact of those services, including orientation courses. Since almost half of all the students in the US are educated by community colleges, and many of the students attending these institutions are identified as “at-risk” to retention and academic success (Hicks, 2005; Howard & Jones, 2000), more research is needed to determine a culture of evidence to assist these students. As the percentage of students entering higher education continues to increase, so does the need to provide multiple retention intervention approaches (Strumpf et al., 2003). This is particularly true in light of the fact that college students enter higher education today, especially at

community colleges, from myriad circumstances with a variety of needs (Cook et al., 2003; Kuh et al., 2006).

The results of this study should be shared with TCC's institutional leaders and faculty who teach the orientation courses to inform decision making and continued improvement. Hearn (2006) called for bold research and policy considerations, especially considering the sizable body of commuting and part-time students. He further added that "particular features of, and barriers to, student success in different socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, cultural, and age populations merit attention" (p.15), chiefly due to inadequate research literature that poorly reflects the current diverse student population.

Additionally, TCC is undergoing an assessment and possible reorganization of the orientation processes currently offered to students. This study provides TCC with baseline data on the orientation course for the TCC Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which may be used as part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Re-affirmation. This research was needed to extrapolate as much information as possible from orientation students' experiences. By expanding on previous research findings through this study and exploring students' perceptions about their experience and the assistance they need to successfully matriculate, this research addressed the identified gap in the community college research literature, particularly as it relates to student engagement, satisfaction, retention, academic achievement, and how it explicitly relates to participation in orientation. Continued assessment efforts and examination of orientation and student outcomes are recommended. It is suggested

that consideration be given to future exploration using a regression analysis to see what variables most impact retention.

Discussion and Additional Implications

Community Colleges have been increasingly pressed for increased accountability (Skipper, 2002), progressively concerned with limited funding (Vaughan, 2004), and challenged by space, access, and the open door philosophy – undermining the very heart of Community College mission (Holmes, 2004). Some consider the Community College a “revolving door” (Derby & Smith, 2004). Others still entrust the responsibility to afford all the opportunity to obtain education and improve economic circumstances, both personally and nationally to the Community Colleges (Banerji, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Accountability is the first step towards discovering deficiencies and determining where institutions are doing well. Student retention has been one of the measures used for a long time to measure student success. While some hold that this may not be appropriate for the Community College setting due to problems with inconsistent definitions, the transient student population at Community College’s, the inconsistent measures, the lack of Community College research presents many challenges (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; McClenney, 2004). Since student retention was one of the variables examined in this study through a secondary data analysis (which found almost no studies conducted), this study begins to address such deficiencies in the empirical research and addresses some of these challenging issues to student success.

More recently, student engagement seems to be “at the heart of the matter,” as it impacts several variables that over time have been studied in isolation. CCSSE and NSSE give rise to prime examples of the significance of studying engagement, and study of the community college has become an increased focus in the literature (CCSSE, 2004). Increased student engagement leads to educationally effective practices (Kuh et al., 2006). The CCSSE proves to be a distinguished tool with which to gather information and inform decision making in order to improve student learning (Marti, 2004). College experience involves much more than making friends, attending class, academic achievement, getting to know faculty, and learning new subject matter. According to Sanford (1969) it involves the whole students’ development. Thus, research exploring student attrition and retention should be focused on multiple variables to predict student success (Brawer, 1996; Glass & Garrett, 1995; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Strumpf & Hunt, 1993; Tobolowsky, 2005).

Orientation is still one of the most helpful and well studied practices in American higher education (Cueso, 1997), this study, however, has occurred primarily at the 4-year institutions (Marti, 2006; Townsend et al., 2004). Within the research reviewed, some research found new college students who do not participate in an orientation do as well as their peers who do participate (Bolender, 1994; Friedlander, 1995; Keenan & Gabovich, 1995; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989), while other studies yielded mixed results (Buchanan, 1993; Fonte, 1997; Habing, 1999; Wolf-Wendel et al., 1999; Tobolowsky, Cox, & Wagner, 2005). Even so, the majority of studies found that orientation promotes student persistence, retention, and graduation, improved academic performance, and increased use of support services (Busby et al.,

2002; Folger et al., 2004; Glass, & Garrett, 1995; Glynn et al., 2003; Ryan & Glenn, 2004; Stupka, 1986; Tobolowsky et al., 2005; Willford et al., 2001).

Perhaps the most controversial implication of the findings from this research concern generalizability of the results. Despite the fact that some of the findings were significant for this sample, conducting more research may be necessary to make informed institutional decisions or utilizing the results for educational policy improvements and practice. The researcher suggested replications of this study would not only be useful to community college administrators making decisions, but it would also reinforce and cross validate the findings. This would not only increase the generalizability of the results found, but also contribute more to the community college literature on student orientation and its impact on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention.

While only a first step in assessing community college student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement and retention, using CCSSE data at one institution, the findings from this study have contributed to the literature on community college students and orientation participation, both empirically and practically. The findings from this study offer specific awareness about TCC on-campus students in the areas of student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention based on orientation course participation. The findings can assist TCC with identifying specific areas that require additional consideration and development in policy and practice.

Through assessing student orientation courses and the impact they may have on student engagement, satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention, as done in

this study, further research in this area “will be a catalyst for the creation and recreation of viable seminars for success of successive cohorts of first-year students” (Barefoot, 2005). As Mullendore et al., (2003) said,

to provide meaningful orientation experiences, staff [and administration] must have at their disposal a comprehensive set of evaluation and assessment data that demonstrates the impact of the program on participants and the institution (184).

This research was a first attempt to do just that with one institution with one sample, during one time period. What is suggested is that researchers continues over time and not terminate at this point.

Furthermore, the number of orientation courses have not only increased over time in offerings, they remain some of the most innovative and flexible courses in the college curriculum, i.e., integration of technology and other important structures such as learning communities and service learning activities (Gardner & Hansen, 2003; Tobolowsky, 2005; Kramer, 2003). These shifts in offerings and flexibility in the curriculum need to be explored to determine their overall impact, if any.

As Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted, on-going research on student engagement is critical to student learning and development in college. This study provides TCC with insight about how on-campus students in this sample utilize support services, perceive their educational experience, engage in extra-curricular activities, interact with faculty, and whether or not the institution provides the support the students need. All of this information is helpful in considering allocation of resources, especially when resources are scarce (Cuseo, 1991; Smith & Brackin,

2003). According to Ketkar & Bennett (1989) and Cuseo (1991) “orientation seminars are cost effective....generating revenues in student retention” (p.3). This is especially critical today at the community colleges where resources are scarce and much focus is on retention strategies. Additionally, Cuseo (1991) provides a conceptual guide to assist administrators with the delivery of the course content and administration of the orientation course. According to Tighe (2006) the VCCS includes most of these suggestions regarding delivery and content. The one exception is the requirement of the course for entering freshman which will also allow for the gathering important entry data on freshman students for institutional research and effectiveness. While these practices may not be practical at all institutions, the researcher recommends them to assist the institution with implementing best practices, and building a culture of evidence to continue funding this vital student need, ultimately maximizing the benefit of the orientation experience.

Lastly, but certainly not least, the study contributed to filling the gap in the research literature on community college students, particularly concerning participation and orientation. While this is only one study at one institution, with one on-campus sample, the results from the CCSR tool yielded valuable information that should be shared. Participation in orientation has not been assessed at the VCCS (Tighe, 2006), and it is the researcher’s belief that this course is one of the foundation courses for students that serve to promote student engagement satisfaction, academic achievement, and retention – each improving student success and learning, but also as a whole purposeful contributing citizens to society. Each variable examined in the study develops individuals who can maintain sociability and responsibility in society.

In summary, as we consider our increased community college student levels of academic and social preparation and the changing ethnic diversity of our college campuses, we also much consider the services we provide to support students, particularly the orientation course. Gardner and Hansen (2003) and Tighe (2006) provide several recommendations for practice as community colleges move forward into the new millennium. Priorities may shift and policies may need reconsideration: yet, global and individual student success depends on the community college leadership of today to make necessary changes needed to assist our in-coming community college students. We not only have an ethical responsibility, but a moral obligation to do so (Gardner & Hansen, 2003) for the success of our future.

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Appendix A

CATEGORIES AND ACTIVITIES OF A TYPICAL ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Category	Activity
Academic Information	Academic Structure, Guidelines, and Regulations Class Scheduling Meeting Faculty and Deans Study Skills Information Exposure to Live or Simulated Class
General Information	Campus Tours Institutional Policies and Regulations Description of Available Services Campus History and Traditions
Logistic Concerns	Financial Aid Business Matters Parking/Car Registration Getting an ID and Library Card Purchasing Books
Social/Interpersonal Development	Information on Campus Clubs, Activities, and Events Social Activities Get Acquainted Exercises Group/Team Building Exercises
Testing/Assessments	Placement Test Attitudinal Test Career Test Personality Test Demographic Survey
Transitional Programming	Special Workshops on Subjects such as: Career Development, Cultural Diversity, Substance Awareness, Personal Safety, Roommates, Acquaintance Rape, and Commuting Workshops on Affective Issues such as: Leaving Home, Changing Relationships, Fears, and Anxieties

Adapted from (Austin, 1988, p. 44). Building an orientation program from the ground. *Campus Activities Programming*, 21, 41-45.

Appendix B

ORIENTATION RESEARCH SUMMARY: COMPARING COURSE PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS

Researcher(s)	Date	Finding(s)	Impact		
			Achiev.	Retention	Persistence
Tinto	1975	Increased GPA	X		
Hoeber	1981	Increased retention		X	
Bean	1982	Increased GPA, credit hours attempted/earned, & retention	X	X	
Stupka	1986	Increased GPA, credit hours attempted/earned, & retention	X	X	
Wilkie & Kuckuck	1989	Increased GPA & CGPA Dif. noted, but not sig.	X	X	
Lipsky & Ender	1990	Increased GPA, credit hours attempted/earned, & retention	X	X	
Fidler	1991	Lower predicted GPA & Increased retention	X	X	
Cuseo	1991	Increased GPA, credit hours attempted/earned, & retention	X	X	
Maisto & Tammi	1991	Increased GPA	X		
Tinto	1992	Increased GPA & retention	X	X	
Strumpf & Hunt	1993	Increased GPA & retention	X	X	
Bolender	1994	No sig. dif in CGPA & retention	X	X	
Glass & Garrett	1995	Increased GPA, credit hours attempted/earned, & retention Age, sex, race, placement scores not sig.	X	X	
Keenan & Gabovitch	1995	Increased GPA & retention Mixed resultsw/credit hrs attempted/earned	X	X	
Mohammadi	1996	Increased credit hours earned sig. Enrollment status, age, race, & sex not sig.	X	X	
Brawer	1996	Full-time attendance sig.		X	
Astin	1997	Placement scores, age, race, & sex sig.		X	
McGrath & Braunstein	1997	Age, sex, & race not sig. - 1st sem. GPA sig.		X	X
Hyers & Joslin	1998	Orientation course grade	X		X
Sidle & McReynolds	1999	Increased GPA & CGPA, credit hours earned, & retention	X	X	
Busby et al.	2002	Increased GPA, retention, & persistence to graduation	X	X	X
NCPS	2003	Age sig.		X	X
Reason	2003	Increased GPA & retention: ethnicity/sex	X	X	
Folger et al.	2004	Increased GPA & CGPA	X		
Derby & Smith	2004	Increased retention & persistence to graduation		X	X
Sparks	2005	Increased GPA & retention	X	X	X
Spector	2005	Increased GPA	X		
Korn	2005	Increased retention		X	
Guell	2005	Increased GPA	X		
Jackson	2005	Increased GPA & retention	X	X	
Pattengale	2005	Increased retention & persistence to graduation		X	X
Rugg	2005	Mixed and inconsistent findings		X	
VerDuin	2005	Increase GPA, retention & persistence to grad	X	X	X
Edge	2005	Increased GPA	X		
Wood	2005	Increased GPA & credit hours attempted/earned sig.	X	X	
Casady	2005	Increased GPA & retention	X	X	
Staley	2005	Increased GPA, credit hours attempted/earned sig. Increased retention & persistence	X	X	X

Appendix C

ORIENTATION RESEARCH SUMMARY

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Researcher(s)	Date	Significant Impact				
		Student-Faculty Interaction	Use of Support Services	Institutional Support	X-curricular Involvement	Academic Preparation
Mastio & Tammi	1991	X				
Keenan & Gabovitch	1995		X			
Robinson & Burns	1996	X				
Brawer	1996					X
Sidle & McReynolds	1999				X	
Crawford	1999					X
Howard & Jones	2000		X			X
Busby et al.	2002	X	X	X	X	X
Folger et al.	2004	X	X	X	X	X
Blowers	2005	X		X	X	X
Jackson	2005	X		X		X
Meuler	2005	X		X		X
Anderson	2005		X	X		X
Korn	2005	X	X			X
Stieha	2005		X		X	X
Ward	2005		X	X	X	X
Hopmeyer-Gorman & Newhall	2005					X
Hazard	2005			X neg.		
Reynolds	2005				X neg. finding	

STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH CAMPUS AND INSTITUTION RELATIONSHIPS

Researcher(s)	Date	Institutional Relationships			
		Campus	Peer	Faculty	Staff
Bean	1982	X	X	X	X
Tinto	1992	X	X	X	X
Meuler	2005	X	X	X	
Korn	2005	X	X	X	X
Anderson	2005	X			
Jackson	2005	X	X	X	X
Hopmeyer-Gorman & Newhall	2005		X		
Edge	2005		X		
Reynolds	2005	X			
Blowers	2005	X	X	X	

6. During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done at this college?
- | | None | 1 to 4 | 5 to 10 | 11 to 20 | More than 20 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Number of written papers or reports of any length | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. Mark the response that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work at this college.

Extremely challenging ⑦ ⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① Extremely easy

8. Which of the following have you done, are you doing, or do you plan to do while attending this college?
- | | I have done | I plan to do | I have not done nor plan to do |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. English as a second language course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Developmental/remedial reading course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d. Developmental/remedial writing course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e. Developmental/remedial math course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f. Study skills course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g. Honors course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h. College orientation program or course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i. Organized learning communities (linked courses/study groups led by faculty or counselors) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

9. How much does this college emphasize each of the following?
- | | Very much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f. Providing the financial support you need to afford your education | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g. Using computers in academic work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

10. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

	None	1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 20	21 - 30	More than 30
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Working for pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Participating in college-sponsored activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Commuting to and from classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Mark the number that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at this college.

Your relationship with:

a. Other Students

Friendly,
supportive, sense of belonging

1 2 3 4 5 6

Unfriendly, unsupportive,
sense of alienation

b. Instructors

Available, helpful, sympathetic

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic

c. Administrative Personnel & Offices

Helpful, considerate, flexible

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid

12. How much has YOUR EXPERIENCE AT THIS COLLEGE contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Acquiring a broad general education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Writing clearly and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Speaking clearly and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Thinking critically and analytically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Solving numerical problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Using computing and information technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Working effectively with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Learning effectively on your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Understanding yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Developing a personal code of values and ethics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Contributing to the welfare of your community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Developing clearer career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Gaining information about career opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SERIAL #

PLEASE DO NOT MARK IN THIS AREA

000

- 13. This section has three parts. Please answer all three sections, indicating (1) HOW OFTEN you use the following services, (2) HOW SATISFIED you are with the services, and (3) HOW IMPORTANT the services are to you AT THIS COLLEGE.**

[illegible]

- 14. How likely is it that the following issues would cause you to withdraw from class or from this college? (Please respond to each item)**

- a. Working full-time
- b. Caring for dependents
- c. Academically unprepared
- d. Lack of finances
- e. Transfer to a 4-year college or university

[illegible]

- 15. How supportive are your friends of your attending this college?**

Extremely ☐ Somewhat
Quite a bit ☐ Not very

- 16. How supportive is your immediate family of your attending this college?**

Extremely ☐ Somewhat
Quite a bit ☐ Not very

- 17. Indicate which of the following are your reasons/goals for attending this college. (Please respond to each item)**

- a. Complete a certificate program
- b. Obtain an associate degree
- c. Transfer to a 4-year college or university
- d. Obtain or update job-related skills
- e. Self-improvement/personal enjoyment
- f. Change careers

[illegible]

24. At what other types of institutions are you taking classes this term? (Please mark all that apply)

- ☐ None
- ☐ High school
- ☐ Vocational/technical school
- ☐ Another community or technical college
- ☐ 4-year college/university
- ☐ Other

25. How many classes are you *presently* taking at OTHER institutions?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1 class
- ☐ 2 classes
- ☐ 3 classes
- ☐ 4 classes or more

26. Would you recommend this college to a friend or family member?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

27. How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this college?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

28. Do you have children who live with you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

29. Mark your age group.

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 to 19
- ☐ 20 to 21
- ☐ 22 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 29
- ☐ 30 to 39
- ☐ 40 to 49
- ☐ 50 to 64
- ☐ 65+

30. Your sex:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

31. Are you married?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

32. Is English your native (first) language?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

33. Are you an international student or foreign national?

☐ Yes ☐ No

34. What is your racial identification? (Mark only one)

- ☐ American Indian or other Native American
☐ Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander
☐ Native Hawaiian
☐ Black or African American, Non-Hispanic
☐ White, Non-Hispanic
☐ Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
☐ Other

35. What is the highest academic credential you have earned?

- ☐ None
☐ High school diploma or GED
☐ Vocational/technical certificate
☐ Associate degree
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's/doctoral/professional degree

36. What is the highest level of education obtained by your:

- a. Not a high school graduate
 b. High school diploma or GED
 c. Some college, did not complete degree
 d. Associate degree
 e. Bachelor's degree
 f. Master's degree/1st professional
 g. Doctorate degree
 h. Unknown

Father

Mother

37. Using the list provided, please fill in the bubbles that correspond to the code indicating your program or major. Using the first column, indicate the first number in the program code, using the second column, indicate the second number in the program code.

<input type="checkbox"/>
(1) (1)
(1) (2)
(2) (1)
(2) (2)
(3) (1)
(3) (2)
(4) (1)
(4) (2)
(5) (1)
(5) (2)
(6) (1)
(6) (2)

- 38. Please provide your student identification number by filling in the corresponding bubbles. For example, in the first column, indicate the first number or letter in your student ID number, and so forth. (OPTIONAL)**

(Please begin here)

[illegible]

Your responses will remain confidential and individual responses will not be reported.

Thank you for sharing your views.

Additional Items (Please respond to these items if requested)

1. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
2. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
3. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
4. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
5. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
6. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
7. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
8. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
9. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
10. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
11. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
12. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
13. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
14. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
15. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
16. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
17. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
18. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
19. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
20. (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)

Appendix E

CCSSE CONSTRUCT DEFINITIONS

Engagement Item	Cluster Definitions for the CCSSE Engagement Data
Academic Preparation	<p>The academic preparation indicator is composed of one survey item. A six-item response scale (<i>None, 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-20 hours, 21-30 hours, More than 30 hours</i>) is used for the following time allotment item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program)
Extracurricular Involvement	<p>The extracurricular involvement indicator is composed of one survey item. A six-item response scale (<i>None, 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-20 hours, 21-30 hours, More than 30 hours</i>) is used for the following time allotment item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in college-sponsored activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)
Institutional Support for Learners	<p>The institutional support for learners indicator is composed of seven survey items. A four item response scale (<i>Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much</i>) is used for the following college opinion items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying • Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college • Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds • Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) • Providing the support you need to thrive socially • Providing the financial support you need to afford your education • Using computers in academic work
Overall Satisfaction of Institution	<p>The overall satisfaction of institution indicator evaluates the entire educational experience at this college on a four response scale (<i>Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor</i>).</p>
Satisfaction of Relationships	<p>The satisfaction of relationships indicator is composed of three survey items on a 7-item response scale (<i>Ranging from 1 to 7, with scale anchors described: (1) Extremely Poor, (2) Very Poor, (3) Poor, (4) Neutral, (5) Good, (6) Very Good, and (7) Extremely Good</i>) is used for ranking the quality of relationships item.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer • Faculty • Administrative Personnel and Offices

Engagement Item	Cluster Definitions for the CCSSE Engagement Data
Student-Faculty Interaction	<p>The student-faculty indicator is composed of seven survey items on a 4-item response scale (<i>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very Often</i>) is used for the following student-faculty interaction activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions • Used email to communicate with an instructor • Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor • Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor • Discussed ideas from readings/classes with instructors outside of class • Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance • Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework
Use of Student Support Services	<p>The student support services indicator is composed of eleven survey items. A four-item response scale (<i>Don't Know/N.A., Rarely/Never, Sometimes, Often</i>) is used for the following student services items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency: Academic advising/planning • Frequency: Career counseling • Frequency: Job placement assistance • Frequency: Peer or other tutoring • Frequency: Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) • Frequency: Child care • Frequency: Financial aid advising • Frequency: Computer lab • Frequency: Student organizations • Frequency: Transfer credit assistance • Frequency: Services to students with disabilities

Appendix F

TCC DATA SHARING AGREEMENT



TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

From here, go anywhere.™

Data Sharing Agreement Form

This agreement pertains to the student information datasets that Tidewater Community College (TCC) is providing to Old Dominion University (ODU) for educational research purposes. Specifically, this data is to be limited in its use to sole support of research work conducted by Ms. Wendy Tighe of the ODU Community College Leadership program in her research effort being conducted under the working title of "The Impact of Participation in a Virginia Community College Orientation Program Course on Student Retention, Academic Achievement, and Academic and Social Engagement". Data provided by TCC will be limited to data collected from the 2005 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). This data will not include individual student identifying information.

I certify that I, as a representative of Old Dominion University, will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as it applies to sharing student specific information. Specifically, I certify that: (1) all student data and information provided will be used for academic research purposes only, (2) Old Dominion University will not share this data with any other entity, except as required by law, regulation, or subpoena and (3) individually identifiable data will be destroyed upon completion of said research.

Old Dominion University Representative

Name (print): Wendy Tighe
Title: PhD Student in Community College Leadership program

Wendy Tighe
Signature

6-4-07
Date

Tidewater Community College Representative

Curtis K. Aasen

Curtis K. Aasen, Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness

6-4-07
Date

Appendix G

ODU DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS DEFENSE APPROVAL



Office of Graduate Studies
212 Kesh Hall
Norfolk, VA 23529
Phone: 757-683-4865
Fax: 757-683-4804

Result of Ph.D. Examination
or Requirement

A separate form shall be submitted following each examination/requirement examination.

This is to certify that on July 5, 2007
Date

Wendy L. Tigha
Student's Name

00126598 who is enrolled in the Community College Leadership program.
ID#

Passed the examination checked below:
Passed/Failed/Completed/Approved

Signatures of appropriate chair or supervisor or committee members required for all examinations.

	Chair/Examiner	Date
Program Examination		
Candidate Examination		
Oral Examination/Defense Examination		
Research Skills Examination		
Special Note:		
Foreign Language Test Examination		
Other (in #800)		
Dissertation Prospectus	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>7/5/07</u>
Remarks:		

Dissertation Title: The Impact of Participation in a Virginia Community College Orientation Program on Student Engagement, Satisfaction, Academic Achievement, and Retention

Graduate Program Director

Date

7/3/07

Student of Graduate Program Name
and Department Name and Program of Study of Graduate Studies

Date (in
day, month)

VITA

Wendy L. Tighe
4040 Mustang Springs Circle ♦ Kingman, AZ 86401 ♦
(928) 279-2301
WendyLTighe@aol.com

EDUCATION

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 2003 - Present | Doctor of Philosophy in Community College Leadership
Old Dominion University – ABD
Expected Graduation – December 2008
Dissertation Title: The Impact of Participation in A
Virginia Community College Orientation Program Course
On Student Engagement, Satisfaction, Academic
Achievement, and Retention |
| 1995 | Master of Science in Higher Education
Administration
Old Dominion University |
| 1992 | Bachelor of Science in Psychology
Christopher Newport University |

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Director of Student Services
Mohave Community College 6/06 – 11/07

Mohave Community College is a medium sized, comprehensive, two-year, rural community college institution of higher education. The College's four campuses serve the northwest corner of the State of Arizona (Mohave County) and its neighboring communities in California, Nevada and Utah. The student body totals over 15,000 students.

- Provide leadership in directing Kingman Campus Student Services in the areas of academic advising, transfer, registration, assessment/testing, recruitment, career services, student activities and events, financial aid, and disability services.
- Administrate college procedures and policies as a leader and student advocate.
- Supervise and review performance of professional, technical, and subordinate staff, including training, delegation of work assignments, employee evaluation and discipline, hiring/termination, promotion, and pay rate recommendations.
- Prepare and manage departmental budget by monitoring expenses and

maintaining compliance within college guidelines.

- Maintain confidential records in compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Advise new and continuing students, maintain advising files, direct all faculty advising training and activities.
- Supervise and coordinate new student orientation and assessment services.
- Direct student recruitment and retention processes through high school (dual enrollment) and community activities.
- Developed tracking systems to determine efficacy of efforts, especially with regards to new student orientation and community recruitment activities.
- Direct programming/promotion/administration of all campus student activities.
- Initiated Student Services Initiated SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to determine strategic plan for departmental/staff needs and improvements – i.e. identified and implemented bi-monthly staff meetings to increase departmental communication and provide a forum for solution focused discussion and on-going professional development opportunities to increase morale and team-building.
- Directed County-wide Advisor Institute for high school counselors that included all local four-year colleges and universities.
- Developed Central Career Center for students to obtain digital and hard copy employment, job skill, resume writing, interviewing techniques, and job searching resources.
- Developed Transfer Station for students to explore local and national four-year college and university, as well as specialty school transfer options. The station included Getting Started Guides, Transfer Tips and Checklists, Course Equivalency and Major Guides, and some application materials.
- Streamlined advising services and processes for new and returning students.
- Partnered with Division Chairs, College Preparatory Service, and Leisure Studies programs to increase enrollment and to better meet student needs. This resulted in decreased course cancellations and course substitution waivers and increased graduation rates and classroom shortages, in addition to increases in GED students beginning credit courses through Early Start Program.
- Increased accessibility for our students with physical disabilities – wheelchair doors and bathroom upgrades.
- Increased testing/assessment services, including WorkKeys, PearsonVue, CNet, Compass, CLEP, Challenge, and Asset.

Student Support Services Counselor

Paul D. Camp Community College 7/03 – 8/05

Paul D. Camp Community College is a relatively small, two-year comprehensive institution of higher education which operates under the state-wide system of community colleges. The College serves residents of the cities of Franklin, Suffolk, and the counties of Isle of Wight and Southampton and is composed of two campuses (a rural campus in Franklin and an urban campus in Suffolk) and a Center (in Smithfield). The student body headcount totals over 2,300 students.

- Administrated comprehensive financial/academic/career/personal counseling to over 150 low-income, disabled, and first-generation college students to promote retention and graduation
- Assisted Project Director with grant writing and DOE reporting responsibilities
- Provided intervention support services
- Coordinated the College's early alert program
- Worked closely with local high schools and external governmental agencies to assist special needs students with transition
- Maintained records in compliance with federal mandates
- Recruited, trained, supervised, and directed professional and technical staff
- Created program publications and promotional materials
- Coordinated cultural enrichment trips and campus events
- Conducted academic and career assessments and workshops
- Increased distance support services provided through creating a Web Portal for students, faculty, and staff
- Managed grant budget and resources – special events/activities, emergency book loan, assistive technology, wage employees, and publications/supplies
- Lead Student Development self-study for SACS accreditation
- Served as Interim Director when Director retired

Education for Independence Director/College Counselor
Paul D. Camp Community College 9/01 - 7/03

- Directed grant program funded by the TANF/VA State funds for single parents, displaced homemakers, and single pregnant women to obtain equal access to vocational education and employment opportunities.
- Wrote and secured two funded one-year grant cycles
- Provided academic, personal, and career counseling for the Franklin campus
- Competitively recruited and selected participants
- Secured funding for students needing support services and/or childcare, book, tuition, or transportation assistance
- Strategically planed and budgeted
- Organized a peer support group
- Insured compliance with all funding source regulations and record requirements
- Conducted personal development and academic success seminars

- Lead, supervised, and directed professional and technical staff
- Coordinated student registration and retention and high school recruitment efforts
- Advised students on curriculum requirements, course selection, and graduation
- Conducted assessments, placement testing advisement, financial aid assistance, and coordinated academic early alert intervention
- Directed campus student activities and advised Student Government Association
- Co-founded and directed Perkins Mini Grant program for high school students interested in non-traditional careers

Learning Specialist/Student Success Counselor

Johnson & Wales University 7/95 - 9/01

Johnson & Wales University, a private, nonprofit, accredited, comprehensive institution of higher education, offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business, food service, education, hospitality and technology. Campuses are located in Rhode Island, Florida, Colorado, North Carolina, and Virginia. Culinary Art and Food Service Management Degrees at the Norfolk, Virginia Campus were offered as day, night, and week-end programs to over 3,000 commuter and residential students.

- Conducted individual and group academic, personal, and career counseling
- Developed orientation program for new, transfer, and returning students
- Lead, supervised, and directed professional and technical staff for tutoring and work study programs
- Campus coordinator for students with special needs and disabilities
- Created and implemented Faculty Disability Care Team
- Founded and conducted support groups for GLBSA and disabled students
- Coordinated all placement testing, portfolio assessment, and crisis counseling
- Worked closely with external agencies and schools
- Conducted outreach prevention seminars and various training programs on campus and residential
- Freshman Advisor and Club Advisor

Student Support Services Tutor Coordinator

Paul D. Camp Community College 8/94 - 7/95

- Recruited, trained, and supervised 15 tutors per semester for dual campus
- Scheduled tutoring for over 100 students per semester
- Maintained extensive administrative record system
- Developed and revised program documents, such as training handbook, policy/procedures manual, and various tutorial forms
- Conducted evaluation reports and individual tutoring/counseling/advising

sessions

- Collaborated with faculty and campus units

Counseling Graduate Intern

Paul D. Camp Community College 6/94 - 8/94

- Provided entry student services: admissions counseling, placement testing administration and interpretation, financial aid guidance, and academic advising to facilitate transition to college
- Assisted admissions and registrars office with administrative tasks and Academic Director with course scheduling

Educational Administrator Graduate Intern

Old Dominion University 5/94 - 7/94

Old Dominion University is an accredited, Carnegie/Doctoral Research-Extensive, public comprehensive institution of higher education offering 67 bachelor's degrees in the basic arts and sciences and in selected professional and pre-professional areas of study, 65 master's, two educational specialist, and 26 doctoral degrees in a variety of fields. With over 590 full-time and 287 part-time faculty, 200 student organizations, and distinguished athletics, the institution enrolls approximately 21,000 students.

- Assisted Graduate Department Chairman and Program Director with administrative duties
- Attended field-based meetings for faculty recruitment and distance learning scheduling
- Advised new graduate students on admission and curriculum requirements, college policies and procedures, and campus resources
- Revised Graduate Student Exit Reflection Survey
- Compiled Spring 1994 Educational Leadership Programs Report

Medical Secretary

Colonial Hospital 7/93 - 9/93

Colonial Hospital of Newport News, Virginia, is a for-profit, inpatient psychiatric illness and chemical dependency treatment facility. The hospital offers inpatient, residential and partial hospitalization treatment for children, adolescents, and adults.

- Maintained patient and unit files, contracts, manuals, and charts
- Scheduled appointments, requisitions, transportation, and inventory
- Provided crisis intervention and suicide patient supervision
- Operated main hospital switchboard

Senior Unit Counselor**Colonial Hospital 2/93 - 7/93**

- Prepared treatment objectives/goals
- Documented patient progress
- Expedited patient admission/transfer/discharge for Adolescent, Women, and Chemical Recovery Programs
- Supervised staff/patients
- Developed and implemented comprehensive evening program for Women's Unit
- Facilitated group and individual therapy, and conducted educational workshops
- Transported patients to community support groups

Psychiatric Aide**Eastern State Hospital 8/92 - 2/93**

Eastern State Hospital, America's First Public Mental Health Facility (est. 1773), is part of the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services system. The hospital's 600-bed facility provides treatment to approximately 500 patients located in Williamsburg, Virginia.

- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Supervised patients with mental illness, retardation, eating disorders, and substance abuse issues
- Documented patient progress
- Exercised crisis intervention/suicide prevention
- Assisted with music/occupational/physical therapy

Counseling Intern**Peninsula Hospital 8/91 - 12/91**

Peninsula Behavioral Center is a 125 bed inpatient psychiatric facility that provides treatment for individuals with psychiatric illness and/or chemical dependency. The hospital offers inpatient, residential and partial hospitalization treatment for children, adolescents, and adults.

- Constructed and implemented an inpatient, four-week eating disorders program for Adult Specialty Unit
- Conducted admission screening evaluations
- Answered crisis hotline
- Lead didactic and therapeutic groups for patients with depression, chemical dependency, and eating disorders
- Assessed individual medical needs, reviewed and updated patient charts, and evaluated/coordinated patient treatment plans at board meetings

Student Orientation Leader**Christopher Newport University 2/89 - 5/90**

Christopher Newport University (CNU) is a small, selective, public, liberal arts university offering more than 80 academic majors and programs at the undergraduate and graduate level in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. With student residence halls and two new apartment complexes, a \$16 million sports and convocation center, and a \$54 million Center for the Arts, 100 clubs, and 23 successful athletic programs, CNU offers over 80 undergraduate and graduate academic majors and programs to over 4,800 students.

- Facilitated adult learning activities and student orientation to college
- Counseled, advised, tutored, and supervised 30 assigned new college freshman
- Directed meetings, individual conferences, and tutoring sessions
- Conducted informational seminars and study skills workshops

TEACHING EXPERIENCE***Adjunct Instructor*****Paul D. Camp Community College 9/94 - 5/03**

- Taught over 20 College Student Orientation/Success Skills/Leadership courses
- Focused on student transition to college and workplace leadership skills
- Introduced students to general college information, services, policies, and procedures
- Taught basic college survival, study, and organizational skills
- Administered campus tours, career assessment and learning style inventories
- Lead communication, team-building, and leadership skills exercises
- Coordinated guest lectures on transferring and library/information literacy

Adjunct Instructor**Johnson & Wales University 9/95 – 5/99**

- Taught the Student Success Lab course which coincided with the developmental math lab class
- Covered college survival, time/stress management, general College information and resources, and effective study techniques to assist with the transition to college and increase student success
- Taught the Life Science Course one semester

Lead Preschool Teacher**Discovery Care Center 1/92 - 5/92**

- Coordinated and implemented all lesson plans and activities
- Maintained student records
- Provided physical/social/emotional/intellectual support for 23 children
- Supervised 2 teaching assistants
- Conducted parent conferences bi-monthly for student progress updates

SELECTED MEMBERSHIPS

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society: Chapter 200 (2006)

Virginia Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (2003-2005)

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2003-2005)

Virginia Community College System Disability Coordinators Peer Group (2003-2005)

Faculty Association Paul D. Camp Community College (2002-2005)

Virginia Community College Association (2003-2005)

Association on Higher Education and Disability in Virginia (2002-2004)

Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society: Old Dominion University

Tidewater Higher Education Disability Service Providers Network (1999-2005)

Order of Omega National Honor Society (Iota Iota Chapter): Christopher Newport University (1991)

Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology: Christopher Newport University (1990)

Gamma Phi Beta Sorority (Epsilon Iota Chapter): Christopher Newport University (1989)

Iota Lambda Sigma Fraternity (Alpha Rho Chapter): Christopher Newport University

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Appreciating Multiculturalism & Diversity at Phi Theta Kappa Area Retreat (July 2007)

Listening & Counseling Skills: Problem Solving and Solution Focused Student Assistance at Pre-College Studies Federal Grant Program (June 2007)

Benefits of Higher Education at International Association of Administrative Professionals (May 2007)

Leadership- Opportunity Seized Today Creates Pathways for the Future at Phi Theta Kappa, Alpha Chi Omega Chapter Induction (March 2007)

Benefits of Higher Education Mohave County In-service (February 2007)

Active Academic Advising: Multiple Approaches to Student Concerns Based on College Policy and Procedures at Mohave Community College: Faculty Advising Training/Faculty Orientation (January 2007)

- Leadership Roles and Responsibilities: Are you Ready for the Challenge?* Mohave Community College: Student Clubs and Organizations Officer's Training (October 2006)
- Intrusive Academic Advising, Academic Early Alert, and Student Complaint Procedures* at Mohave Community College: Faculty Advising Training/Faculty Orientation (August 2006)
- Ethics and Responsible Conduct for Research* at Old Dominion University: Doctoral Student Summer Institute Seminar (June 2005)
- Working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in a Community College Setting* at The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) in Virginia Conference: Williamsburg, Virginia (March 2005)
- Disability Law in Higher Education* at Paul D. Camp Community College: Teaching Faculty In-service (January 2005)
- Best Practices: Tutoring, Advising, Learning Communities, and Study Groups for First Generation, Low-income, Minority, and Freshman Students* at Paul D. Camp Community College: Achieve the Dream Retreat (December 2004)
- Interactive Faculty and Staff Student Support Services PowerPoint Presentation* (November 2004)
- Teaching College Students with Disabilities* at Paul D. Camp Community College: Teaching Faculty In-service (August 2004)
- STD 100 – Online Orientation Courses* Concurrent Session at Virginia Community College System's Counselors & Disability Coordinators Peer Conference: Williamsburg, Virginia (2004)
- Effective Communication Skills and First-Year Freshman Advising* at Johnson & Wales University:
- Freshman Advisor In-Service (1997-1999: *Diversity and Multiculturalism Training* for Johnson & Wales University: Norfolk, Virginia, Faculty and Staff (1995)
- Student Resident Assistants and Leadership Annual Institute (1995-1999)
- How to Reduce Stress* Concurrent Session at Virginia Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (VACRO) Conference: Williamsburg, Virginia (1996)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Student Leadership Handbook- Co-editor Mohave Community College (2007)
- Faculty Advising/Transfer Handbook (Section B) – Mohave Community College (2007)
- Student Leadership Handbook- Co-editor for Mohave Community College (2006)
- Evaluation Report for Paul D. Camp Community College's Distance Learning Orientation *Inquiry: The Journal of the Virginia Community Colleges* (Submitted Spring 2007)
- Tighe, W. L. (2006, Spring). Virginia community college system's online college orientation: A Faculty survey and syllabi analysis to determine delivery methods of course objectives. *Inquiry: The Journal of the Virginia Community Colleges*, 11(1), 35-48.

Student Support Services Web Portal for Paul D. Camp Community College
<http://www.pc.vccs.edu/SSS/Default.htm> (2005)
 Old Dominion University: Community College Leadership PhD Program Manuals
 (2004)
 Special Needs & Disabilities Handbook for Johnson & Wales University (2000)
 Tutor Manual & Reference Guide for Johnson & Wales University (1997,
 Revised 1999)
 Educational Leadership Programs Report for Old Dominion University (Spring
 1994)
 Student Support Services Tutor Handbook for Paul D. Camp Community College
 (1994)

SELECTED COMMITTEES & LEADERSHIP

Student Success Team: Mohave Community College (2007-2008)
 Jenzabar Conversion Advising Module Manager (2006-2007)
 Curriculum Committee: Mohave Community College (2007-2008)
 Student Services Leadership Team: Mohave Community College (2006-2008)
 Campus Information Council: Mohave Community College (2006-2008)
 Management Council: Mohave Community College (2006-2008)
 Campus Recruitment Team Mohave Community College (2006-2008)
 Campus Communications Council Mohave Community College (2006-2008)
 Vice President, Faculty Association: Paul D. Camp Community College (2005-
 2006)
 Chair, Educational Support Com.: Paul D. Camp Community College (2005-
 2006)
 Vice Chair, Educational Support Com.: Paul D. Camp Community College (2004-
 2005)
 Admissions and Review Committee: Paul D. Camp Community College (2002-
 2005)
 Ad Hoc Hearing Committee: Paul D. Camp Community College (2003-2005)
 Schedule Committee: Paul D. Camp Community College (2003)
 Scholarship Committee: Paul D. Camp Community College (2001, 2002)
 Director, Disability Care Team: Johnson & Wales University (1997-2001)
 Admissions and Review Committee: Johnson & Wales University (1994-2001)
 President, Order of Omega: Christopher Newport University (1991)
 Historian, Gamma Phi Beta: Christopher Newport University (1990-1992)
 Vice President, Psi Chi: Christopher Newport University (1990)
 Vice President, Gamma Phi Beta: Christopher Newport University (1989-1990)
 Scholarship Chairman, Gamma Phi Beta: Christopher Newport University (1989-
 1992)

GRANT WRITING EXPERIENCE

2005 Student Support Services TRIO Grant: Department of Education.
 Awarded \$1,015,488 Total (Four years at \$253,872 per year)

- 2004 Education for Independence Grant: Department of Education
Commonwealth of VA. Awarded \$40,000 Total (\$20,000 per campus)
- 2003 Education for Independence Grant: Department of Education
Commonwealth of VA. Awarded \$104,000 Total (\$52,000 per campus)
- 2002 Updated Local Grant Plan for Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical
Education Act of 1998. Awarded \$50,000
- 2001 Perkins Improvement Mini Grant: Carl D. Perkins Vocational and
Technical Education Act of 1998. Awarded \$11,528

AWARDS

Who's Who Among Women in North America (2008)
 Golden Key International Honour Society (2008)
 Biltmore Who's Who Among Executives and Professional Women (2008)
 Old Dominion University Graduate Scholarship (2007)
 Appreciation Recognition International Administrative Professional Association
 (2007)
 Who's Who among Executives and Professionals (2007)
 Who's Who Among America's Teachers (2005)
 Old Dominion University Graduate Fellowship (2005)
 PDCCC Educator of the Year Nomination (2005)
 Old Dominion University Graduate Scholarship (2005)
 Carl D. Perkins Certificate of Appreciation and Excellence (2002)
 Club Advisor Dedication Award (1999)
 Exemplary Service Award for Tri-Support Club Advisement (1998)
 DREAM (Desire, Retention, Education, Achievement, and Motivation) Team
 (1997)
 Outstanding Service 1996-1997 Rainbow Club Advisor (1997)
 Greek Woman of the Year (1991)
 Daisy Garland and Sidney Harmon Award: Christopher Newport University
 (1991)
 Outstanding Young Woman of America: Christopher Newport University (1991)
 Who's Who Among Students in American Universities & Colleges (1990)
 The National Dean's List (1989, 1992)
 United States Achievement Academy All-American Scholar (1989)
 Gamma Phi Beta Love and Learning Awards (1989)

SELECTED COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Mohave Community College Speaker's Bureau (2006-2007)
 Virginia State and National PTA (2002-2005)
 Suicide Crisis Center, Inc. Hotline Volunteer (1995-1997)
 Camp Seashell for Girls (1989-1992)