7-3-2013

It Takes an Institution's Village to Retain a Student: A Comprehensive Look at Two Early Warning System Undergraduate Retention Programs and Administrators' Perceptions of Students' Experiences and the Retention Services they Provide Students in the Early Warning System Retention Programs

Shelly-Ann Hamilton
shellyann_hamilton@yahoo.com

Recommended Citation

Hamilton, Shelly-Ann, "It Takes an Institution's Village to Retain a Student: A Comprehensive Look at Two Early Warning System Undergraduate Retention Programs and Administrators' Perceptions of Students' Experiences and the Retention Services they Provide Students in the Early Warning System Retention Programs" (2013). *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1008.
https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/1008

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

IT TAKES AN INSTITUTION'S VILLAGE TO RETAIN A STUDENT: A

COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT TWO EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

UNDERGRADUATE RETENTION PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATORS'

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND THE RETENTION

SERVICES THEY PROVIDE STUDENTS IN THE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

RETENTION PROGRAMS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Shelly-Ann Hamilton

2013

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
    College of Education

This dissertation, written by Shelly-Ann Hamilton, and entitled It Takes an Institution's Village to Retain a Student: A Comprehensive Look at Two Early Warning System Undergraduate Retention Programs and Administrators' Perceptions of Students' Experiences and the Retention Services they Provide Students in the Early Warning System Retention Programs, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_____
Joan Wynne

_____
Joanne Sanders-Reio

_____
Glenda Musoba, Co-Major Professor

_____
Thomas G. Reio, Jr., Co-Major Professor

Date of Defense: July 3, 2013

The dissertation of Shelly-Ann Hamilton is approved.

_____
Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

_____
Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2013

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; who

through the best book ever written (The Holy Bible) has lit my path on this journey.

When I began this journey several years ago, God revealed to me that He had wonderful

plans for me, and throughout the journey, has been there giving me the courage,

motivation, strength, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, to accomplish all things.

Without God in my life, I am nothing and can do nothing! He is my rock, strength,

foundation, wonderful counselor, inspiration, light, and revelation. Who I am, and what I

do, are because of Him, and for Him.

I would also like to dedicate this book to my wonderful parents; family; friends;

classmates; and professors/mentors from The State University of New York at Buffalo's

undergraduate program, Barry University's graduate program, and Florida International

University's doctoral program; all of whom, have been wonderful support,

encouragement, motivation, and prayer warriors throughout my educational journey.

They have been the most wonderful guardian angels God has sent to travel with me on

this journey. I would also like to thank the IRB offices and departmental administrators,

at the two institutions where I conducted my data collection; as well as my doctoral

committee.

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future" - - Jeremiah 29:11

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" - - Philippians 4:13

"[Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, are] God's empowerment that gives you the ability to go beyond your ability" - - John Bevere

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

IT TAKES AN INSTITUTION'S VILLAGE TO RETAIN A STUDENT: A

COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT TWO EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

UNDERGRADUATE RETENTION PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATORS'

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND THE RETENTION

SERVICES THEY PROVIDE STUDENTS IN THE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

RETENTION PROGRAMS

by

Shelly-Ann Hamilton

Florida International University, 2013

Miami, Florida

Professor Thomas G. Reio, Jr., Co-Major Professor

Professor Glenda Musoba, Co-Major Professor

Institutions have implemented many campus interventions to address student

persistence/retention, one of which is Early Warning Systems (EWS). However, few

research studies show evidence of interventions that incorporate noncognitive

factors/skills, and psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes in the EWS. A

qualitative study (phenomenological interview and document analysis) of EWS at both a

public and private 4-year Florida university was conducted to explore EWS through the

eyes of the administrators of the ways administrators make sense of students' experiences

and the services they provide and do not provide to assist students. Administrators'

understanding of noncognitive factors and the executive skills subset and their

contribution to retention and the executive skills development of at-risk students were also explored. Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms and Perez's retention strategies were used to guide the study. Six administrators from each institution who oversee and/or assist with EWS for first time in college undergraduate students considered academically at-risk for attrition were interviewed.

Among numerous findings, at Institution X: EWS was infrequently identified as a service, EWS training was not conducted, numerous cognitive and noncognitive issues/deficits were identified for students, and services/critical departments such as EWS did not work together to share students' information to benefit students. Assessment measures were used to identify students' issues/deficits; however, they were not used to assess, track, and monitor students' issues/deficits. Additionally, the institution's EWS did address students' executive skills function beyond time management and organizational skills, but did not address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes.

Among numerous findings, at Institution Y: EWS was frequently identified as a service, EWS training was not conducted, numerous cognitive and noncognitive issues/deficits were identified for students, and services/critical departments such as EWS worked together to share students' information to benefit students. Assessment measures were used to identify, track, and monitor students' issues/deficits; however, they were not used to assess students' issues/deficits. Additionally, the institution's EWS addressed students' executive skills function beyond time management and organizational skills, and psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes.

Based on the findings, Perez's retention strategies were not utilized in EWS at Institution X, yet were collectively utilized in EWS at Institution Y, to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms. Future research could be designed to test the link between engaging in the specific promising activities identified in this research (one-to-one coaching, participation in student success workshops, academic contracts, and tutoring) and student success (e.g., higher GPA, retention). Further, because this research uncovered some concern with how to best handle students with physical and psychological disabilities, future research could link these same promising strategies for improving student performance for example among ADHD students or those with clinical depression.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions' stability in terms of student enrollment, programming, state and federal funding, alumni contributions is dependent on student persistence (or retention). Yet, first-year college students' high attrition (or departure) rates are making it extremely difficult to maintain stable enrollment and at the same time respond to external sources' accountability and assessment pressures to improve retention (Davidson, Beck, & Milligan, 2009; Hudson, 2005; Lenning et al., 1980).

Attrition (or departure) in 4-year institutions, is often defined as students consistently stopping out (planned or unplanned) and leaving the institution before attaining a baccalaureate degree (Engle, Reilly, & Levine, 2004; Lenning et al., 1980; McQueen, 2009). According to the 2001 National Center for Educational Statistics, approximately 40% of all undergraduate students who enrolled in college only completed up to 3 years (Mann, Hunt, & Alford, 2004). In addition to institutional reasons for departure (e.g., cost, lack of opportunities for academic and social integration), students may also leave college before completing a baccalaureate degree, because of uncertainty about college goals (or lack of commitment) and financial issues. They may also leave because of psychological (cognitive and noncogntive) factors. For example, cognitive and metacognitive factors such as lack of (or low) awareness, perception, reasoning, judgment, and knowledge of how one thinks. Similarly, noncognitive factors such as lack of (or low) academic self-concept, locus of control, self-regulated learning, academic

related skills, academic identification, and/or achievement goal motivation, has been associated with student attrition as well (Davidson et al., 2009).

Lack (or low levels) of the aforementioned cognitive and noncognitive factors can contribute to poor executive skills functioning (Downing, Kwong, Chan, Lam, & Downing, 2008), which is "a built in capacity to meet challenges and accomplish goals *(act, think, feel, and regulate behavior)* through the use of higher-level cognitive functions [italics added]" (Dawson & Guare, 2004, p.1). This is a vital concern in that high levels of executive skill functioning are required to manage performing well in the classroom and beyond (Fontana et al., 2005); students lacking them are at a greater risk of failure in an academic setting. Fontana et al., (2005) stated that students who are at risk for attrition rarely have these problems in isolation. Rather, these problems are numerous and cut across different aspects of their lives.

In addition to the impact attrition has on students, attrition also leads to accountability and assessment pressures from external sources (e.g., students and parents, society, state and federal governments) to implement quality programs and services that decrease the national dropout rate both locally and nationally. Attrition leads to reduction in governmental funding, tuition and student fee revenue, and alumni contributions. Unrealized graduation despite accruing substantial student loan debt is also increasingly being scrutinized because society and thus workplaces are faced with retraining these individuals, despite substantial investment through the nation's educational system (Davidson et al., 2009; Hudson, 2005; Kiser & Price, 2008; Lenning et al., 1980; Ryan & Glenn, 2002).

Furthermore, "the changing demands of the workplace necessitate that a higher percentage of the population acquire . . . [pertinent] skills" (Sidle & McReynolds, 1999, p. 288). The marketplace is therefore questioning the level of student preparation as students graduate from high school/college lacking sufficient metacognitive (knowledge of and control over one's thinking) and noncognitive skills (e.g., coping skills, time-management and organizational skills) to perform in today's fast changing workplace environment (Ryan & Glenn, 2002; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999). Metacognition and noncognitive skills are critical in the workplace because they support employee learning and development, which in turn help organizations address challenging workplace and societal problems (Downing et al., 2008; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999).

Persistence (or retention) in 4-year institutions, in contrast to attrition, is most commonly defined as continuous enrollment until a baccalaureate degree is achieved (Braxton, Brier, & Steele, 2007; Derby & Smith, 2004; Lenning et al., 1980). Institutions are very concerned about students' persistence rates, because it is essential for higher education institutions to maintain institutional stability and ultimately contribute to the greater common good through producing an educated workforce. However, as described above, high attrition (or departure) rates for first-year college students have been making it very difficult for higher education institutions to maintain this stability (Davidson et al., 2009; Hudson, 2005; Lenning et al., 1980).

The research evidence clearly indicates that too many undergraduate students are leaving college without graduating (Davidson et al., 2009; Hudson, 2005). Many questions remain as to why (Dawson & Guare, 2004; Keup, 2006; Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008; Mann et al., 2004; Pan, Guo, Alikonis, & Bai, 2008; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005; Peterson, Lavelle, & Guarino, 2006; Proctor, Prevatt, Adams, Hurst & Petscher, 2006; Shivpuri et al., 2006; Ting, Grant, & Plenert, 2000). Could students' unpreparedness when they enter college, which oftentimes leads to stressful transition and integration situations, be the catalyst for attrition in addition to academic factors (Kiser & Price, 2008). Are administrators focusing on students' challenges and students' core developmental needs? For example, are they focusing on students' metacognitive skills (e.g., executive skills function, critical thinking, deductive/inductive reasoning, creativity, and communication skills) and the executive skills subset of metacognition that encompasses the high-level cognitive functions needed to meet challenges and achieve goals? Likewise, are administrators focusing on students' noncognitive skills (e.g., self-concept, self-esteem, locus of control, coping skills, time-management and organizational skills, identification with academics)? Are programs (e.g., Early Warning Systems) with university services and other critical departments working together to share students' concerns that can be used to benefit students, in place at institutions?

Early Warning Systems (EWS) are invisible safety nets comprised of advisors, faculty, academic and student life staff, support services, and retention staff, among others, who work together to identify students with academic and social difficulties (Kuh, 2002). Once students' academic and social difficulties are identified through EWS, students are then connected with campus resources (e.g., academic advisors, faculty, learning support specialists, counseling services) to eliminate obstacles to academic success, and empower them to become sufficiently resilient in the face of adversity (Kuh, 2002). These campus resources can function cohesively to detect undesirable changes

related to at-risk students and report them to EWS to forestall (or correct) possible problems (Birnbaum, 1998).

Still, one must ask to what degree are these programs designed to help students identify, address, and eliminate (or transition through) the multi-faceted and complex challenges; and academically and socially integrate into the university? Are these programs also designed to further prevent attrition by helping students develop executive skills functioning through cognitive reorganization (CORE) processes such as psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling and student success coaching, to help facilitate the challenges associated with stressful transition and integration situations? Executive skills functioning is a set of interacting components (cognitive and noncognitive) responsible for in-depth, purposive, and self-regulated behavior (Parker & Boutelle, 2009; Peterson et al., 2006; Rachal, Daigle, & Rachal, 2007). Research shows that "skills associated with the capacity to perform well academically," are highly dependent upon executive functioning abilities (Latzman, Elkovitch, Young, & Clark, 2010, p. 455). For instance, "the ability to plan and sequence complex behaviors, simultaneously attend to multiple sources of information, grasp the gist of complex situations, resist distractions and interference, inhibit inappropriate responses, and sustain behavior for prolonged periods" are related positively to higher order cognitive processes, and in turn, better academic performance (Latzman et al., 2010, p. 455).

As discussed above, external pressures on institutions, and the multi-faceted reasons students leave the institution (and the reasons why it is so important to retain them), are forcing institutions to reevaluate and develop new methods to identify potential at-risk students (Witherpoon, Long, & Chubick, 1999). Institutions are

beginning to respond to the situation using numerous strategies, such as consulting persistence theories, models, and variables (e.g., Astin's I-E-O model and theory of involvement, Tinto's theory on fit between the institution and student, Pascarella and Terenzini's emerging theories on student intent and persistence, metacognitive and noncognitive variables, Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms, and Perez's retention strategies) to guide action. Moreover, institutions are also responding to the situation by using information about metacognitive and noncognitive factors, and the executive skills subset to guide action strategies like EWS, the focus of this study.

Rationale for Study

Hermanowicz (2003) states that there is no universally effective antidote for student attrition; especially when students and their needs differ between (and within) institutions. However, college and university programs and cultures that promote persistence (or retention), such as a culture of enforced student success (having quality retention programs in place prior to students becoming at-risk for attrition) and multi-faceted approaches that are intrusive and integrative (e.g., Early Warning Systems) are movements in the right direction to remedy the situation regardless of the type of institution (Braxton et al., 2007; Hermanowicz, 2003). This is because they maximize the breadth and depth of interaction that alter the process of leaving long before students make the final decision to leave.

A major impetus to understanding and dealing more effectively with the student persistence issue was the decrease of minority student college enrollment and higher dropout rates in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. In an effort to remedy this critical issue,

the Higher Education Act of 1965 was reauthorized (Lang, 2001). The Higher Education Act was established to achieve equal opportunity in education through quality programming. To comply with the Higher Education Act of 1965 and increase the retention of minority students, institutions implemented a series of TRIO programs, one of which was Student Support Services (SSS; Braunstein, Lesser, & Pescatrice, 2008; Hand & Payne, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Webb & Brigman, 2006). The SSS represents a move toward a culture of *enforced* student success. SSS offers nine instructional services designed to promote students' academic adjustment, persistence, degree completion, and success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Included in the nine instructional services are: tutoring, academic, financial, and personal counseling, mentoring, writing and math labs, and orientation, study skills, and career guidance workshops (Hand & Payne, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Under a culture of enforced student success, all students are viewed as having the potential to be at high-risk for attrition. As a result, institutions that practice a culture of enforced student success tend to have in place quality academic, social, and retention programs, to assist students when they face academic difficulty, and to enhance persistence (Braxton et al., 2007). One such program is Early Warning Systems (EWS).

Research suggests that effective EWS function as checks and balances to further improve student persistence. This checks and balances system identifies students at risk of not persisting while in college and alert students and campus units when students have negative academic performance. EWS with checks and balances also help campus units intervene with at-risk students before they experience further academic difficulty, and collectively monitor their holistic development and success (Keith & Tully, 1993; Kuh,

2002, 2007; Kuh et al., 2007; Powell, 2003). At Alabama State University (ASU), for instance, improved retention and graduation rates became the mission of the institution (Powell, 2003). ASU began focusing on improving teaching techniques; increasing the number of tutors, tutor availability, and amount of one-on-one student support; requiring writing assignments in all courses; and increasing faculty hours, among other approaches (Powell, 2003). They also began implementing EWS to alert students when they are in jeopardy of not passing a course (Powell, 2003). Unlike ASU, many EWS at institutions fail to incorporate other departments, which unnecessarily limit the results of the program. Furthermore, similar to ASU, many EWS fail to successfully incorporate (or incorporate) psychotherapy counseling and student success/life coaching geared toward executive skills functions to advance metacognitive and cognitive skills and ultimately student performance.

In addition to many EWS failing to incorporate other departments across campus to collectively help the student, metacognitive and noncognitive factors/skills and the multi-faceted (and interactive) interventions that can address them (e.g., *multi-interactive* educational pipeline models such as the multi-faceted EWS) are understudied and infrequently utilized in higher education, despite evidence suggesting that they contribute to retention and academic success (Braxton et al., 2007; Green, 2006; Hermanowicz, 2003; Honan & Rule, 2002; Keup, 2006; Kinzie et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendon, 2006; Shivpuri, 2006; Ting et al., 2000). When institutions embrace this ideal and implement programs that take these factors into consideration, this can translate into improved cognitive and noncognitive skills, academic and social integration, and retention and persistence.

To understand retention best, and how to improve it, administrators arguably need to know the extant retention research. With a lot of literature on student development and success theories, and substantial dialogue and lofty goals about what should be done, it was important to examine if retention administrators know the research, and if it guided their programming. Therefore, when examining EWS as the researcher did in this research, it was pertinent to ascertain the degree to which administrators actually knew the research when implementing an intervention. For example, what did administrators actually know about the research and what they were implementing, were they actually doing what they claimed, and what were the reasons they gave for not implementing interventions that research deems necessary. Research suggests retention initiatives should go well beyond tutoring, yet many campuses have little direct attention to retention programming. Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009) found much less investment in retention efforts than the mission statements about valuing student education suggests. For example, only a portion of campus-based retention coordinator's time was allotted to retention work in the CBS pilot study, because retention efforts were replaced with other roles that were more pressing. The CBS pilot study is further discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. Finding the alignment or misalignment between public narrative, beliefs, and programming; and whether theory and research guided programming, were addressed in this dissertation study.

Conceptual Framework

Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms was the retention theory used to guide the dissertation study (see Table 1 below). It consists of and merges the following four paradigms: learning, development, economic, and students' purpose.

9

The theory and associated four paradigms provide a comprehensive approach useful for viewing the entire student experience and designing multi-interventions that can remedy attrition and improve student success (Borland, 2001; Braxton et al., 2007).

Table 1

Conceptual Framework Model

	Retention lenses theory/paradigms or strategies			
Hossler and Bean's (Multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms)	Learning	Development	Economic	Student purpose
Perez's (Retention strategies)	Sorting	Supporting	Connecting	Transforming

Borland (2002) and Perez (1998).

Multiple retention paradigms (or wide-angle lenses theory), such as Hossler and Bean's (1990), link the benefits of retention and persistence theories. They also generate dialogue and encourage intrusive and integrative interventions that cut across all areas of the institution: academic affairs, student affairs, administration, and students, to enhance student learning, development, and success (Borland, 2001). Thus, Hossler and Bean's four retention paradigms (learning, development, economic, and student purpose) were used to determine how the specific actions (retention strategies and/or interventions) used by EWS to assist at-risk students and achieve overall retention at the institution, align and/or do not align with the four retention paradigms. It was also used to determine how the values/stated purposes and desired outcomes of EWS, and the institution, align with each other, and the theoretical frameworks.

Perez's (1998) retention strategies (sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming), which are critical in translating Hossler and Bean's multiple retention

lenses theory/paradigms (Borland, 2001) into actionable retention interventions, were used to study interventions designed to assist academically at-risk students (see Table 1 above). Perez (1998) hypothesizes that sorting (identifying students who need intervention), supporting (helping students identify barriers and address problems), connecting (encouraging interaction and academic and social integration), and transforming (changing students and the institution) should be used to design interventions that identify and help students (especially at-risk students) overcome barriers, persist, and achieve academic success. These retention strategies are critical in translating Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms into actionable retention interventions (Perez, 1998). For example, using sorting strategies such as pre-enrollment assessment and Early Warning and Academic Alert, to identify students who need intervention; and using supporting and connecting strategies to assist students with problems such as learning and study skills, metacognitive and/or noncognitive factors/skills, grades, and balancing academic and social environments. These strategies are designed to transform institutions so positive changes in academically at-risk students occur (Perez, 1988). Connecting strategies such as assisted learning and mentoring are used to encourage academic and social integration. Transforming strategies such as counseling and student success/life coaching are also used to transform institutions (Perez, 1998).

EWS, and cognitive and noncognitive factors and the executive skills subset were the central focus of this dissertation study. The population of interest was administrators working with first time in college (FTIC) undergraduate students; with focus on those working with FTIC students considered academically at-risk for attrition.

11

Administrators, rather than students, were interviewed, because administrators were able to provide information about what institutions were doing to address external sources' accountability and assessment measures, identify the retention and engagement theories and models used to guide EWS, and describe the assessment tools EWS use to learn about students' concerns. They were also able to provide information about how their respective EWS addresses students' cognitive, noncognitive, and executive skills deficits. Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory (or paradigms) and Perez's retention strategies (sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming), were also used to study interventions designed to assist academically at-risk students, and to guide the dissertation.

Implications for the Study

This research study is significant, because there are few research studies out there about institutions focusing on this situation. There are theoretical, research, and practical implications for this study. First, theoretical contributions could be made by testing the models in the context of this research. For example, many of the models had never been explored, and exploring the models in a EWS setting could enrich our understanding of the models and lead to recommendations for further exploration and research. Research contributions could be made by exploring the models in this EWS setting in the areas of persistence and retention, student learning and development, metacognition, and noncognitive factors and the executive skills subset. In addition, it could also inform research in the areas of psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling and student success/life coaching, and their potential impact on EWS.

Findings from this study could inform policies, practices, etc., in the field of higher education, particularly as they pertain to persistence, retention, at-risk students, and EWS. For instance, with what could be learned from this research, there would be more support for allotting precious resources acquired from state, federal, and institutional funding towards providing formal and coordinated retention programs. In addition, the findings could also support investing in more staffing designated specifically for retention programs, and training and empowering retention staff to better understand and assist at-risk students in therapeutic settings such as student success/life coaching.

Overall, the results of this research could distinguish new predictor variables that identify at-risk students more clearly and connect new psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes to addressing students' issues and development needs. The findings could also provide institutions with a broader understanding of EWS and the campus services that work together to share student information that can benefit students. Additionally, the findings could provide institutions with a broader understanding of what they do and do not do to assist students, and be motivated through the study, to better assist students. Finally, heightened research in these areas could translate into more effective interventions that lead toward finding a remedy for student attrition.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

There is considerable literature dedicated to student development and success theories and singular and multi-purpose interventions, designed to enhance student retention in higher education institutions. However, few research studies show evidence of interventions that incorporate psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling and

student success/life coaching. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the phenomenon through the eyes of the administrators of what administrators perceived students were experiencing in the EWS, and the services they provided and did not provide to assist students in these programs. This information should provide insight into how EWS programs can contribute to improving student retention.

This dissertation was a qualitative, phenomenological study of EWS at two 4-year institutions (one public and one private). Four-year institutions were selected for this study because of the homogeneity of freshmen students. Additionally, two institutions (one public and one private) were selected from among the 4-year institutions, to better explore the phenomenon through a larger (and more varied) administrative audience who work with EWS and to get a broader sense of what institutions as a whole, were doing to assist students in EWS. The two differing types of institutions were also selected to facilitate comparison with what varied 4-year institutions were doing to assist students in EWS, which can differ with the type of 4-year institution selected. They were also selected to better apply Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms, especially the economic paradigm, which can also differ with the type of 4-year institution selected. Research questions were answered by analyzing documents at the institution and interviewing EWS administrators working with EWS to gain their perspectives of the programs.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the institutions doing to improve retention in EWS?

2. (a) How are assessment measures used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address, students' issues or deficits in EWS?

(b) Are university services and critical departments such as EWS, working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students?

3. What are administrators' perspectives of students' experiences, development, and retention issues?

4. Do EWS meaningfully address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes consistent with research evidence?

5. Do EWS meaningfully address students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills consistent with research evidence?

Definitions of Terms

Academically at-risk student. "A student assessed as having potential for college success when appropriate educational enrichment and support services are provided" (Arendale et al., 2007, p. 13).

Academic skills. Behaviors or thought processes (e.g., abilities and techniques such as executive skills/function, noncognitive skills, metacognitive activities, learning and study strategies) needed to identify, acquire, and understand new knowledge (Dawson & Guare, 2004; Downing et al., 2008; Meltzer, 2007; Peterson et al., 2006; Smith, Rook, & Smith, 2007).

Active learning. Student is physically, socially, and psychologically, involved in doing things; and thinking about (attempting to understand) the things he or she is doing through critical processing, reflection, and comprehension (Braxton & McClendon, 2001-2002; Entwistle & McCune, 2004).

Cognition. "The mental process of knowing and includes aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgment" (Burdick & Goldberg, 2008, p. 1-22).

Cognitive reorganization (CORE). When students are taught how to effectively self-monitor (become more personally aware of their problem solving ability), successfully use "strategies, concepts, attention to one's thinking, caution about traps of thinking," and modify strategies that facilitate learning/scholarship, to achieve higher order practical and academic abilities. CORE includes five categories: Strategies (e.g., learning, metacognitive, or organizational strategies), Metacognition (knowledge of and control over one's thinking process), Disposition (which are tied to emotion), Distributed Cognition (support systems), and Transfer (which occurs in situated learning; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997, p. 1128; Rachal et al., 2007).

Cognitive strategies (or cognitive skills). "Behaviors and thoughts that influence the learning process so that information can be retrieved more efficiently from memory" (Dembo as cited in Arendale et al., 2007, p. 14).

Deep level learning. Learning is internally motivated. It is an intention to understand, by "paying attention to the meaning and significance of the materials *being*

learned [italics added]" (Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Lonka, Olkinuora, & Makinen, 2004, p. 302).

Disposition. Reorganizes thinking through the use of emotion (sensitivity and inclination), in order to detect when a particular pattern of thinking is needed and determine goals and courses of action (Downing et al., 2008; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Distributed cognition. Reorganizes thinking to develop executive skills functions by guiding learners in the use of physical support systems (e.g., paper and pencil, computer programs that provide short-term memory, computational aid), social support systems (e.g., collaborative brainstorming through team thinking and experts), and symbolic support systems (e.g., hypothesis, option, evidence, diagrams that represent relationships; Downing et al., 2008; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Dysrationalia. "A level of rationality, as demonstrated in thinking and behavior, that is significantly below the level of the individual's intellectual capacity…Thinking is hasty (impulsive, insufficient investment in deep processing and examining alternative), narrow (failure to challenge assumptions, examine other points of view), fuzzy (careless, imprecise, full of conflations), and sprawling (general disorganization, failure to advance or conclude)" (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997, p. 1125).

Early Warning Systems. Invisible safety nets comprised of advisors, faculty, academic and student life staff, support services, and retention staff, among others, who work together to identify students with academic and social difficulties. Once students' academic and social difficulties are identified, students are then connected with campus

resources (e.g., academic advisors, faculty, learning support specialists, counseling services) to eliminate obstacles to academic success, and empower them to become resilient and not withdraw from the institution when faced with adversity (Kuh, 2002).

Executive skills. "A built in capacity to meet challenges and accomplish goals *(act, think, feel, and regulate behavior)* through the use of high-level cognitive functions [italics added]" (Dawson & Guare, 2004, p. 1).

Executive skills function or functioning (executive function, executive processes, or executive skills development). (a): A form of metacognition, where the thinker can pay attention to and change his or her thinking (Downing et al., p. 610). **(b):** A set of interacting components (cognitive and noncognitive) responsible for in-depth, purposive, and self-regulated behavior (Peterson et al., 2006; Rachal et al., 2007).

Frontal lobe. The central region of the brain responsible for executive function that requires higher-order cognition needed to accomplish tasks/goals (Dawson & Guare, 2004; Engle et al., 1999; Meltzer, 2007; Thorell et al., 2009).

Higher-level thinking skills (or higher order cognition). "Processing material at the cognitive levels of analysis, synthesis, or evaluation" in contrast to lower order skills like memorization or recall (Bloom as cited in Arendale et al., 2007, p. 20).

Identification with academics. "The extent to which one's self-evaluation in a particular area (academics) affects one's overall self-evaluation (global self-esteem)" (Osborne, 1997, p. 59).

Learning. (a): "The intake, use of, and construction of knowledge (Entwistle & McCune, 2004). **(b):** Acquisition by individuals of skills, information, values, and attitudes (both intentionally and unintentionally), as well as demonstrated ability to apply or transfer to new situations" (Arendale et al., 2007, p. 22).

Learning strategies (or learning skills). Any methods and techniques (e.g., thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, emotions, tactics, and plans such as communication, organization, and study skills) students use to complete tasks to facilitate the acquisition, understanding, or later transfer of new knowledge and skills and improve learning and performance outcomes (Arendale et al., 2007; Cano, 2009; Petersen, Lavelle & Guarino, 2006; Rachal et al., 2007).

Locus of control. (a): "Individual's perception of who or what is responsible for the outcome of events and behaviors that affect his or her life" (Dembo as cited in Arendale et al., 2007, p. 23). **(b):** "The extent to which individuals are self-directed *and self-regulated*, believing themselves to be in control of their own fate [italics added]" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 223).

Metacognition. (a): "Reflection, understanding, and knowing how one learns" (Arendale et al., 2007, p. 24). **(b):** "It is thinking about thinking," where the thinker understands (has knowledge of), and can plan and control (reflect/analyze, regulate/monitor, draw conclusions, reorganize/revise or direct) his or her own thought process/thinking to achieve goals (Downing et al., 2008, p. 610; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Mindlessness. "The shallow processing of information that allows outrageous anomalies to pass by unnoticed" (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997, p. 1125).

Multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms. "A wide angle lens that view the entirety of student experience," in order to improve retention. It includes: Learning Paradigm - - providing formal, college specific, unique opportunities to enhance learning; Development Paradigm - - providing formal and informal, college specific, unique opportunities to develop as human beings; Economic Paradigm - - recognizing that shifts in retention rates impact institutional economics; and Students' Purpose Paradigm - - valuing what persisting in college can help them accomplish (Borland, 2001, pp. 368-375).

Noncognitive skills (noncognitive factors or noncognitive predictors). The background characteristics/inputs (self-concept, self-esteem, locus of control, goal setting, coping skills, time-management and organizational skills, identification with academics, etc.) students bring to the college environment, which students attempt to evaluate and balance during the desocialization and socialization processes in order to achieve their personal goals (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Self-concept. It is closely related to self-esteem, and is an individual's self-perception of his/her confidence and ability (e.g., academic performance, social-self concept, and/or overall performance) to act in a certain way (e.g., perform and persist at tasks) which leads to desired outcomes. It is formed through experience/feedback (e.g., past learning experiences, performance, and observations) with the environment and

20

other people's judgment of one's capabilities (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Engle et al., 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Self-esteem. The evaluation of one's own performance in a specific domain (e.g., academic, social, and/or overall domain; Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Osborne, 1997; Rachel, Daigle, & Rachal, 2007).

Self-regulated learning (SRL). "A learner-directed process geared toward promoting effective academic skills; students approach learning in a proactive way and engage in self-generated thoughts, feelings and behavior *(e.g., intrinsic motivation, manage own learning, engage in more metacognitive monitoring and control)* that are geared toward meeting goals [italics added]" (Peterson et al., 2006, p. 60; Muis, Winne, & Noel, 2007).

Situated learning environment. "A learning environment *(e.g., courses, interventions, assignments, group projects, workshops, sessions, programs)*, that fosters general cognitive reorganization [italics added]" (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997, p. 1129; Downing et al., 2008).

Strategy. (a): "The process of reorganizing thinking by providing patterns *(or skills)*…that work against *(or address)* the following defaults: hasty, narrow, fuzzy, and sprawling thinking, and prescribe effective heuristics for the kinds of thinking in question [italics added]" (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997, p. 1128). **(b):** Heuristics that improve thinking include learning, study, noncoginitive, metacognitive, or organizational strategies (e.g., problem-solving techniques, decision-making, mnemonic devices); or

general purpose approaches that focus on a specific subject area (Downing et al., 2008; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Study skills (or study strategies). (a): "Competence in acquiring, recording, organizing, synthesizing, remembering, and using *(initiating)* information and ideas, and are among the skills that can be modified for learners of all ages" (Proctor et al., 2005, p. 37). **(b):** Behaviors and procedures (e.g., time management; goal-setting; choosing the right study environment; using adequate note-taking, self-testing, and organizational skills/strategies; good concentration skills [focusing attention and avoiding distractions]; selecting main ideas from texts; study aids; managing anxiety and stress; effective concentration) that improve the acquisition, understanding, and application of knowledge and skills when they are applied to learning tasks (Arendale et al., 2007; Downing et al., 2008; Proctor et al., 2006; Rachal et al., 2007).

Surface-level learning (or rote learning). It is academically defined as the reproduction of information through rote memorization and reiteration/rehearsing content, which is distinct from superficial learning (learning that is extrinsically motivated; Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Lonka et al., 2004).

Transfer. (a): "use of information gained in one domain to solve a problem encountered in a different domain" (Arendale et al., 2007, p. 30). **(b):** It occurs in situated learning environments and includes reflective abstraction and infusion to reorganize thinking and broaden knowledge base (Downing et al., 2008; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Transition (or situation). Any event or nonevent that is predictable, unpredictable, continuous and emotionally numbing, or perceived but does not actually occur (Dean & Eriksen, 1984; Schlossberg and others, 1985).

Triarchic intelligence. Fluid intelligence (higher order construct in the frontal lobe), which is comprised of biological intelligence (neural intelligence), intelligence acquired through new knowledge and personal experience (experiential intelligence), and the ability to think critically and self-monitor own behavior (reflective intelligence; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Will (volition or motivation). "Intentional or self-directed action, with planning linked to the identification of the steps or elements needed to carry out intentions" (Peterson et al., 2006, p. 61).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Intelligence plus character; this is the goal of true education" - - Martin Luther King Jr.

A number of streams of research contribute to our understanding of Early

Warning Systems (EWS) and student attrition (or departure) and the programs and

services administrators might utilize to address those student needs. These streams of

research include theoretical models on student engagement and/or departure. These

streams of research also include factors such as students' background characteristics,

metacognition, and noncognitive factors; as well as, the numerous at-risk factors that also

contribute to student attrition.

EWS are invisible safety nets comprised of advisors, faculty, academic and

student life staff, support services, and retention staff, among others, who work together

to identify students with academic and social difficulties (Kuh, 2002). Once identified,

students are connected with campus resources (e.g., academic advisors, faculty, learning

support specialists, counseling services) in order to eliminate obstacles to academic

success, and empower them to become resilient and not withdraw from the institution

when faced with adversity (Kuh, 2002). Metacognition is knowledge of and control over

one's thinking (Arendale et al., 2007; Downing et al., 2008; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997).

Noncognitive factors/skills are the background characteristics/inputs (e.g., socioeconomic

status, self-concept, locus of control, career preferences, values and beliefs, academic

identification, and aspirations) students bring to the college environment, which students

attempt to evaluate and balance during the desocialization and socialization processes in

order to achieve their personal goals (Keup, 2006; Kinzie et al., 2008; Pan et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Peterson et al., 2006; Proctor et al., 2006; Shivpuri et al., 2006; Ting et al., 2000). This section of the dissertation will be an in-depth exploration of the various streams of research just mentioned.

Theoretical Models on Student Engagement

and/or Departure

While these theoretical models were developed independently, many overlapping themes exist between the models, particularly students' pre-entry attributes (cognitive and noncognitive), psychological variables, and social and academic engagement and integration. Cognition is "the mental process of knowing and includes aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgment" (Burdick & Goldberg, 2008). Astin's early I-E-O model and theory of involvement also referred to as the college impact model, addresses how students change/develop during college. Astin's model states that students learn, grow, and are retained when they are physically and emotionally invested in and actively involved in, the learning environment (Derby & Smith, 2004; Kiser & Price, 2008). This model views college as functions of inputs (the things students bring to college such as demographic characteristics, family background, academic and social experiences, and cognitive and noncognitive factors/skills), environment (the things students encounter on and off campus when they enroll in college, such as people, programs, policies, services, cultures, and experiences), and outcomes (students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors after college; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). When students are actively involved/engaged in the college's multi-faceted environment- - physically and psychologically invested - - and spend substantial

time on tasks (both in terms of quantity and quality), this leads to an increase in learning, interaction, integration, and persistence within the institution's academic and social systems (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

While Astin emphasizes level of student engagement, Tinto's theory and research focuses more on fit between the institution and the student and uses the vocabulary of social and academic integration to emphasize that students who are integrated are more likely to persist (Keup, 2005-2006; McQueen, 2009; Metz, 2004-2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Tinto's model has been criticized for emphasizing the need to break with past relationships in order to effectively integrate into the institution's academic and social systems. This is problematic because, past relationships (e.g., parents, friends) may be important sources of support for many nontraditional students and students from certain ethnic groups (McQueen, 2009). Bean and Metzner's theoretical model, which utilizes the theory of job turnover, state that in addition to academic variables and expectations/aspirations, college departure is also associated with psychological variables such as satisfaction, stress, and transition, among others (Metz, 2004-2005). Bean and Metzner also focused on non-traditional students, which is a weakness in Tinto's early work. Weidman added a focus on noncognitive factors. Weidman's model of undergraduate socialization centers on noncognitive factors such as socioeconomic status, self-concept, locus of control, career preferences, values, and aspirations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) emerging theories on student intent and persistence, integrate all of the models and theories. This theory asserts that social and academic involvement and integration (e.g., student and faculty interactions)

influence students' learning, transition, self-concept, locus of control, satisfaction, persistence, retention, and academic success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

In sum, these theories make the claim that together, students' pre-entry attributes (e.g., cognitive and noncognitive factors, among others), environmental variables, goals and commitments, involvement, and academic and social integration within a multi-interactive educational pipeline, influence student retention (Ethington & Horn, 2007; Guiffrida, 2006; Hermanowicz, 2003; Hoyt, 1999; Metz, 2004-2005; Pan et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Multi-interactive educational pipeline models, such as Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms, utilize traditional retention theories such as those described above, to actively involve students (physically, psychologically/emotionally, and academically; Borland, 2001). They also utilize retention theories to help students (e.g., at-risk students) successfully move throughout (and through) the university's educational system and enhance learning and development along the way (Borland, 2001).

The retention theories and models just discussed, emphasize that when students exert quality time and effort in educational opportunities and activities, it has a direct impact on their development, learning (e.g., cognitive and metacognitive), noncognitive factors/skills, persistence, retention, and graduation (Derby & Smith, 2004; Ethington & Horn, 2007; Keiser & Price, 2008; Kuh, 2002; Metz, 2004-2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Ryan and Glenn (2002) state that, freshmen who can successfully develop the cognitive and noncognitive skills needed to thrive academically, will become better consumers of instruction, more satisfied customers, and more able and committed learners. They will also become more active agents during the academic identification,

academic and social integration, and institutional commitment processes (Ryan & Glenn, 2002). All of which, correspond with increased academic persistence and retention. With this in mind, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) may be correct in their assumption that grades and academic persistence, retention, and success over time, are not beyond the institution's influence and intervention. Additionally, improvement in noncognitive factors/skills, are further discussed below, may also be within the institution's influence. Therefore, institutions should reflect on cognitive and noncognitive factors/skills and implement programs that take these factors/skills into consideration. Institutions should also utilize student engagement and departure theories, and Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms with its many dimensions of students' experiences, to design and strengthen interventions that engage students and learning along the multi-interactive educational pipeline. Taking these things into consideration can translate into improved cognitive and noncognitive skills and the executive skills subset, academic and social integration, and retention and persistence.

Noncognitive Factors Contributing to Students' Attrition and Degree Completion Behavior

As mentioned above, many factors have been identified as influencing students' attrition and degree completion behaviors. They consist of students' background characteristics (e.g., psychological, cultural, and social factors, such as parent's educational attainment, ethnic/racial characteristics, socioeconomic status, prior-college academic performance, financial aid or loan status, family responsibilities, and job responsibilities); metacognitive skills (e.g., executive skills function, critical thinking, deductive/inductive reasoning, creativity, and communication skills); and noncognitive

predictors (e.g., self-concept, self-esteem, locus of control, goal setting, coping skills, time-management and organizational skills, lifestyle activities, identification with academics, and ability to delay gratification; Keup, 2006; Kinzie et al., 2008; Pan et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Peterson et al., 2006; Proctor et al., 2006; Shivpuri et al., 2006; Ting et al., 2000). Less well researched are the noncognitive factors, which have been shown to be under students' control; as well as, influence academic success (Keup, 2006; Kinzie et al., 2008; Pan et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Shivpuri et al., 2006; Ting et al., 2000).

Noncognitive factors (e.g., self-esteem, self-concept, locus of control, and academic identification) have been shown through research, to impact learning, retention, and student success. Students, who have a strong internal locus of control, are internally motivated; highly motivated to set goals, study, and engage in academic socialization; and can successfully regulate/monitor their own learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students, who have a strong internal locus of control, are also motivated to learn strategies that lead to desired results, have more control and accept responsibility for the choices/actions they make, and attribute their own efforts as the reason for their success (or failures; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students with positive self-concept and strong internal locus of control, see themselves as more capable, are more confident in their abilities, and have more autonomy (control over their own choices; Hand & Payne, 2008; Kuh, 2007). Students with positive self-concept and high levels of internal locus of control are more likely to be successful academically and socially; have increased critical and problem-solving skills; are more creative; can self-regulate their behaviors, and can easily delay current gratification for long term goals (Hand & Payne, 2008; Kuh, 2007).

29

This was very evident in the meta-analysis study which compared the results from 11 different studies that focused on the relationship between students' self-concept and academic performance; and four longitudinal studies that focused on students' internal locus of control and academic success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Results from the meta-analysis showed an unbiased correlation between self-concept and academic performance. Results from the four longitudinal studies showed that successful students were more likely to attribute their academic success to an internal locus of control (hard work); rather than luck, change, or the instructor.

Unlike students with positive self-concept and a strong internal locus of control as described above, students who are at risk for attrition, frequently have lower high school GPA and standardized test scores; unclear goals; and negative self-concepts (McConnell, 2000). They also have external locus of control (attribute their fate, failure, and success to others, luck, or chance); doubts about their abilities and capabilities; and lack basic cognitive and noncognitive skills (McConnell, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As a result, they are often underprepared (e.g., lower reading, math, and critical thinking skills), and infrequently participate in academic and social engagement once enrolled (Hand & Payne, 2008; McConnell, 2000). They also have lower college semester grades, and continuously need to be academically and socially validated (Hand & Payne, 2008; McConnell, 2000). Humphrey (2006) raised a valid point when he stated, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to retain students. This is even more pronounced because students are reporting they spend less time studying, which illustrates a growing trend in their lack of academic readiness (Humphrey, 2006). According to Mann, Hunt, and Alford (2004), and Humphrey (2006), students increasingly lack skills pertinent to

academic success such as cognitive learning and study skills, self-concept, internal locus of control, efficient time management, and a system of accountability. Support systems centered on learning skills assistance, will actually increase these students' GPA and retention, persistence, and graduation rates (Mann et al., 2004).

In addition to cognitive skills that are pertinent to academic success, which are described in the executive skills section below, how students identify with academics, their academic motivation to remain enrolled, and how they perceive their critical thinking and problem-solving skills/strategies, can also provide insight into how well they will succeed academically (Downing et al., 2008; Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Osborne, 1997; Rachal et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2007). In theory, when students have positive (or higher) identification with academics, they are more motivated to succeed because a positive correlation exists between self-esteem and academic outcome (or performance; Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Osborne, 1997; Rachal et al., 2007). In contrast, a lack of identification with academics is attributed to behavior problems, school absenteeism, and drop-out proneness (Osborne, 1997).

If institutions could increase students' self-esteem, self-concept, and locus of control, through positive identification with academics, this could help students in academic difficulty return to good academic standing (Osborne, 1997). Additionally, because noncognitive factors influence persistence and student success, improving noncognitive factors and the executive skills subset through cognitive reorganization (CORE) processes such as situated learning environments, will also lead to persistence and student success.

Executive Skills and Executive Skills Deficit

of At-Risk College Students

Executive skills is defines as "a built in capacity to meet challenges and accomplish goals *(act, think, feel, and regulate behavior)* through the use of high-level cognitive functions [italics added]" (Dawson & Guare, 204, p. 1). Executive skills function is defined as a set of interacting components (cognitive and noncognitive functions) responsible for in-depth, purposive, and self-serving behavior (Peterson et al., 2007). These separate but interacting components are working memory, response inhibitory control (personality/emotional variables and perception), and correction of error when needed (Cooper, 2009; Marcovitch & Zelago, 2009; Meltzer, 200; Thorell et al., 2009). A lack in any of the three components, constitute a deficit in executive function and the need for interventions that focus on developing executive function. In addition to a lack of psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling, there is also a lack of executive skills function in EWS. For example, student support that focuses on executive skills function/development beyond basic time management and organization skills is absent at most institutions.

The Phoenix program and Checkpoint program discovered that in order to help students who had executive function deficits, one-time programs do not work because one-time programs are limited in their ability to impact executive skills (Ryan & Glenn, 2002). The Phoenix and Checkpoint programs were implemented to develop students' executive skills function over time. Through experience with students in the Phoenix and Checkpoint programs, Ryan and Glenn (2002) discovered that students' level of academic success was strongly influenced by learning strategies. They also discovered

that alone, advising and counseling sessions could not improve the quality of learning strategies and academic competence. This is because advising and counseling sessions cannot replace the extended instruction, knowledge, practice and reflection, feedback, and application received in extended programs (Ryan & Glenn, 2002). To effectively retain students, students must be equipped with academic skills needed to become productive learners; as well as develop a greater self-concept and internal locus of control needed to face demanding class requirements (Ryan & Glenn, 2002). Both academic and psychological processes were critical.

Our mind is capable of higher-order thinking; yet, we frequently do not use our minds to its fullest potential (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997). When students have parents who lack executive skills functions, they exhibit similar executive skills deficits (Dawson & Guare, 2004). Additionally, when students are taught within a standardized test taking system that did not teach them how to develop and use executive skills, they are limited in their ability to learn how to use their minds to solve complex and open-ended problems when they enroll in college. This is because standardized tests are designed so that right and wrong answers can be easily scored in straightforward and invariant ways (Dawson & Guare, 2004). Students are taught by high school teachers to be passive learners - - learners presented hierarchically with information that require only memorization (Zohar, Degani, & Vaaknin, 2001). They are tested with approaches that require less comprehension and higher-order cognition, because teachers feel they get confused, frustrated, and stuck, when performing tasks that require higher-order cognitive thinking (Zohar et al., 2001).

According to a large-scale survey (cited in Steinberg 2000), approximately 40% of all high school students report that they are simply going through the motions. As a result of being deprived of explicit instructions on how to adequately apply skills, educational experiences that require higher order thinking, and opportunities to apply these skills, these approaches do not help students develop their pre-frontal lobes (the common pathway that manages information and behavior from one brain region to another), which are responsible for executive skills functioning (Dawson & Guare, 2004). To quote Steinberg "for many young people, this foundering period can last into their late 20s …enter adulthood lacking either credentials or the kinds of critical thinking and problem-solving skills and habits of mind and work, such as persistence and self-management that seem to be the basic currency of the emerging economy" (2000, p. 40). Underdeveloped pre-frontal lobe and the foundering period can result in many students not graduating from high school; and students who graduate and pursue college, inadequately prepared for college-level work. Students then enter college lacking effective learning and study habits (Rachal et al., 2007; Steinberg, 2000; Zohar et al., 2001). Research literature declares that when these students enter college, they may exhibit the phenomena known as mindlessness and dysrationalia, which are summarized as the inability to manage information and behavior in the brain (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997; Zohar et al., 2001). These students may also lack triarchic intelligence (neural intelligence, experiential intelligence, and reflective intelligence), which is vital to learning effectively.

Bigg's Cognitive Information-Processing Psychology Model, which was developed in 1970 to demonstrate how newly acquired knowledge/information enters the

memory, illustrates the importance of the prefrontal lobe, mindfulness, and triarchic intelligence, in helping students learn effectively. According to the model, newly acquired knowledge/information enters the memory stem through senses during the intake process, and then goes through a set of processing systems (e.g., construction, organization, elaboration, and comprehension monitoring) that are activated by arousal (e.g., interest, anxiety) before entering short term memory or working memory (Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Rachal et al., 2007). Once newly acquired knowledge/information enters the processing system, it is coded using critical reflection, repetition, and rehearsal, before it is connected to prior knowledge within long term memory (Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Rachal et al., 2007).

The Bigg's Cognitive Information-Processing Psychology Model makes the claim that, rote learning (or surface level learning) alone does not enhance this process or constitute effective learning. What enhances this process or constitutes effective learning is meaningful learning (or deep level learning) acquired through higher levels of cognitive analysis, which focuses on approaches such as intrinsic motivation and the search for personal meaning in course content (Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Rachal et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Higher order cognition, which occurs in active learning context/environments, uses evidence to relate and restructure ideas, motivate through ideas presented, and encourage openness to alternative viewpoints (Entwistle & McCune, 2004).

In addition to the strategic approaches to learning just discussed, strategic approaches to studying (learning effective strategies) are also very important to advancing executive skills functioning and achieving meaningful learning. There are two

very distinct types of learning strategies. One operates directly on information (e.g., rehearsal, elaboration, and organization), and the other provides affective and metacognitive support for learning (e.g., affective control strategies and comprehension monitoring strategies; Weinsten & Mayer as cited in Cano, 2006; Entwistle & McCune, 2004). Both types of learning strategies are vital to successfully integrating knowledge and establishing long term working memory.

Rachal, Daigle, and Rachal (2007) state that, students will develop effective learning and study skills strategies, if they are exposed to effective models and environments, which encourage practice and provide feedback. Learning and study skills strategies, which improve executive skills function, may occur through long-term engagement in situated learning environments such as workshops, individualized sessions (e.g., psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling, student success coaching), or courses focusing on learning strategy instruction (Cano, 2006; Downing et al., 2008; Entwistle & McCune, 2004). These situations produce more successful learning outcomes and more progressive long-term development, by moving students from a surface-level learning (rote memorization and reiteration/rehearsal of content) to deep-level learning (intention to understand the information) through the process of cognitive reorganization (Lonka et al., 2004).

In summary, as children grow into adolescent their executive skills should be developed, which leads to a higher level of metacognition (Dawson and Guare, 2004). However, some adolescents fail to adequately develop executive skills as children and enter college lacking vital skills needed to succeed and become effective learners in college and society, because their prefrontal lobes were not fully developed as they grew

(Dawson & Guare, 2004; Rachal et al., 2007). Additionally, the method of standardized testing and hierarchical learning through which most students were taught, lack the ability to enhance executive skills function. What students need when they enter college are not more passive learning approaches full of non-analytical content; but rather more challenging tasks requiring abstract reasoning and cognitive skills, timely and effective mechanisms that provide accurate feedback about abilities in using reasoning and cognitive skills, and opportunities to connect classroom knowledge to real world situations (Rachal et al., 2007; Steinberg, 2000). To address these issues and enhance executive skills function, students can undergo cognitive reorganization (CORE) in college to help them gain a broader knowledge and connect classroom learning to the real world, enhance motivation, sharpen cognitive and reasoning skills, enhance executive skills functioning, and nurture mindfulness (Perkins & Grotzer, 1997). Cognitive reorganization (CORE) and situated learning approach such as student success/life coaching, are discussed more in depth in the executive functioning and student success coaching sections of this chapter. The next section of the dissertation will focus on EWS, the campus intervention designed to promote retention and persistence. It will investigate what makes this program so important to higher education and the benefits derived for students.

Campus Interventions

Numerous retention programs have been implemented to enhance students' academic and social integration, academic success, and retention rates. Many use retention strategies and rely on psychological processes such as cognitive and noncognitive factors/skills (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Perez, 1998). Psychological processes

that are the focus here are self-concept, the cognitive skills needed to adapt and/or cope in new situations; the will to learn and study; and internal locus of control to achieve success and have a positive attitude toward college and academic success (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Perez, 1998).

A university-wide system geared toward the retention of students; and which takes into consideration psychological processes, is needed to diagnose and address the causes of attrition (Hudson, 2005). Experts suggest this university-wide system should not be a one-size fits all approach, such as the single-educational pipeline; but rather, a multiple-interactive educational pipeline model, that combines many different interventions to assist students (e.g., predictive modeling, departments working together to share information about students, intrusive and developmental approaches, assessment instruments to identify students' deficits, one-on-one and/or group psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling, and student success/life coaching, among others). Interventions should also utilize assessment instruments (broad-based or individual level) to identify at-risk students' individual and collective reasons for attrition, level of expectation, level of academic and social integration, institutional and degree commitment, satisfaction with support services, and psychological (cognitive and noncognitive) adjustment.

The Indiana Project on Academic Success (IPAS) and the College Board Pilot Study on Student Retention (CBS) research projects, were conducted at different 4-year and 2-year institutions across the country to gain insight into campus efforts that can enhance student persistence (Hossler et al., 2009). Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009) discovered that in order for targeted interventions to be successful in enhancing student

learning, success, and persistence, then time, willingness, and commitment from the entire institution (e.g., student affairs, academic affairs, faculty, support services, policymakers, and students) are vital. Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009) also discovered that these interventions should be intrusive, integrative, and holistic; and should include contact with a significant person (faculty, peer, and/or staff) who can influence learning, persistence, and retention.

When interventions incorporate as processes such as contact with someone who can influence learning and persistence, students develop what Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009) refer to as, a portfolio of relations that can be accessed at anytime for academic and social information/resources. Downing et al., (2008) also claim that when students interact with a significant person on campus it encourages cognitive and noncognitive development. To avoid scrutiny; achieve internal effectiveness; and become accountable for students' academic success, retention, and graduation rates, colleges and universities are implementing curriculums, programs, services and resources, and interventions, with these considerations in mind (Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

Despite differences in institution's uniqueness and population; holistically, the interventions (coaching, psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling, and EWS) discussed in this dissertation (whether used individually or as a multi-faceted approach/a web of interlocking initiatives), help students develop psychological processes (e.g., executive skills, executive skills function, coping strategies, internal locus of control, increased knowledge base, learned behavior) which research suggests promote student success and improve persistence and retention rates at many institutions (Kuh, 2002; Lenning et al., 1980). For example, the Indiana Project on Academic Success (IPAS) and

the College Board Pilot Study on Student Retention (CBS), conducted by Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009), are empirically grounded insight into what institutions are doing or how they organize themselves to enhance student learning and graduation rates and identify policy levers.

Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009), used empirically grounded research conducted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and surveys and case studies of faculty, administrators, and students, to examine 12 public universities with high persistence and graduation rates in the IPAS study. Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009) also identify the practices, policies, and campus-based interventions used by those institutions in the CBS study to influence student learning and success; validate their research argument and support their findings; and design campus interventions geared toward increased student learning, persistence, retention, and success. Examples of practices, policies, and procedures, include who was in charge of tracking and coordinating campus retention efforts to fix problems identified by managers, whether or not those assigned to fix problems were empowered enough to organize programs and initiatives, what benchmarks institutions used to assess their own efforts, how institutions organized and assessed their orientation programs and EWS, how annual retention and graduation analysis were conducted, and how they budgeted for new initiatives and programs (Hossler et al., 2009).

Data from the CBS study indicated that even though 60% of the institutions reported they hired a retention coordinator who was responsible for tracking and coordinating campus retention efforts, only 1/3 of the retention coordinator's full-time position was actually allocated toward coordinating retention efforts. Data from the CBS

study also indicated that only 40% of the retention coordinators were authorized to implement new programs or initiatives; of which, only 1/4 actually had the funds to implement those new programs or initiatives (Hossler et al., 2009).

Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (2009) also noticed from the CBS study, that nationally, 69% of the institutions with lower than predicted graduation rates had a retention coordinator, 84% had a campus-wide retention committee, and 24% had mandatory class attendance policies for first-year students. Among the institutions with higher-than-predicted graduation rates, only 55% had a retention coordinator, 64% had a retention committee, and 7% had mandatory attendance policies for first-year students. This revealed a very important administrative oversight of retention at the institutions piloted in the CBS study, which is less effort devoted to campus-based retention efforts to enhance student persistence. To quote Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross:

> Our results revealed that the amount of effort to improve persistence – as reflected in the amount of dedicated administrative time, in the authority of the responsible person to influence policy, and in the funding for programs – was low across the full range of respondents in this study. Those with lower graduation rates may be doing more, but there is little evidence that most campuses are making extensive efforts to reduce student withdrawal. *CBS and IPAS have* [italics added] the potential to provide important insights into the intensity of institutional commitments to enhance persistence and graduation rates and the efficacy of these efforts. (2009, p. 7)

The 4 year IPAS study consisted of student surveys and a series of focus groups with faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Document analysis was also used to

present a broader picture of how the various institutions' cultures, policies, and characteristics, impacted persistence and graduation rates at those institutions. Results from the IPAS study revealed three challenges (academic literacy, student retention, and financial need) incoming students are likely to encounter when they first enter college; which, should be addressed in institutional programs (Hossler et al., 2009).

Early Warning Systems

A campus intervention, for which there are few empirical research studies, that is gaining prominence in identifying and serving at-risk students is Early Warning Systems (EWS). Kuh (2002) defines EWS as an invisible safety net comprised of advisors, faculty, academic and student life staff, support services, and retention staff, among others, who work together to identify students with academic and social difficulties. Once students' academic and social difficulties are identified, students are then connected with campus resources (e.g., academic advisors, faculty, learning support specialists, counseling services) in order to eliminate obstacles to academic success, and empower them to become resilient and not withdraw from the institution when faced with adversity (Kuh, 2002). As per Lang (2001) and Hazeur (2008), when institutions have strong support and endorsement from top level administration and other campus constituents, programs such as EWS will be more successful.

After close review of the literature on EWS, it was discovered that there was a lack of empirical research on the topic. Literature, indicate that EWS should be formal and coordinated to assist students who start college with risk factors (e.g., 3 or more risk factors) that may lead to student attrition; or who, once enrolled in college (especially during the first 2 or 3 weeks), appear to be experiencing academic difficulty, poor

attendance, and/or other behaviors that can impede satisfactory academic progress (Keith & Tully, 1993; Kuh, 2007; Kuh et al., 2007). The definitions of formal and coordinated programs usually differ across institutions. Some institution's EWS mandate that students in academic difficulty use referral forms, etc., while other institution's EWS do not mandate participation or use referrals. Some institution's EWS also have well-coordinated programs with many university services working together to share information, enhanced technology to track and assess the program, and/or faculty and academic affairs and student affairs support; while other institutions have less coordinated programs where university services do not work together to share information; basic or no technology to track and assess the program; and/or lack of support from faculty, academic affairs, and student affairs support.

In addition to program coordination to better serve students, many institutions are also focusing on different approaches to identify at-risk students who are in need of interventions. Some institutions are using predictive modeling to identify at-risk students who are in need of interventions, and assist them with the transition process (Lenning et al., 1980). To improve retention at their institution, Ohio State University, with assistance from the USA Group/Noel-Levitz consulting company, instituted a predictive modeling system to identify risk factors and determine strategies to assist at-risk students (Reisberg, 1999). Based on the retention findings, Ohio State University established a personal contact program for high-risk students, which included several different conversation pathways. For example, students who had low high school ranks or who took few math courses during high school were contacted by an academic advisor and referred to tutoring or guidance services. The Financial Aid department, contacted

students who indicated they planned to work long hours or did not receive adequate financial aid. Students, who applied late, were contacted by the Student Affairs department to address their sense of belonging at the institution. After implementing the program, Ohio State University saw an increase in retention rates the following term.

Though many institutions are using predictive modeling to predict/identify students at-risk for intervention, Kuh et al., point to "midterm progress reports, course embedded assessment, and early alert systems that incorporate a network of individuals (faculty, mentors, academic support units, peer support groups)" as the most effective strategies in helping students address early adjustment difficulties (2007, pp. 80-81). For example, of the numerous institutions that responded to the CBS study, 58.1% stated they collect midterm grades for all first year students (Hossler et al., 2009). Though suitable, midterm progress reports may be too late to assist students who are experiencing academic difficulty. Subsequently, identifying students who appear to be having academic difficulty the first 2 or 3 weeks of each term, may pose problems for some institutions, because grades are not available within the first few weeks of the term. In addition, faculty engaged in course embedded assessment (e.g., faculty feedback required by the Early Warning Program), may not be able to report on academic progress (e.g., grades) because tests and/or homework are not assigned within the first 2 or 3 weeks of the term.

Students' academic performance and persistence can be greatly improved if institutions use comprehensive and open EWS that allow faculty to openly report students who are not doing well academically and/or behaviorally in their course; as well as, allow students who feel they are academically at-risk to self-report when they are not doing

well academically. Academic status is a great predictor of retention; and approaches such as those described in the EWS, are great at identifying and assisting students who greatly overestimate their academic abilities; and as a result, encounter academic difficulty (Ryan & Glenn, 2002). Probation prevention programs such as the midterm progress report checkpoint program described above are great at helping students identify early in the semester, that low test grades can lead to low final grades, academic difficulty, and/or attrition (Ryan & Glenn, 2002). According to Ryan and Glenn (2002), freshman are capable of personally acting on that information, but may not heed those early warning signs or act quickly enough to avoid D or F grades that lead to academic probation.

Currently, many EWS are linking what Kuh (2007) refers to in his article as, first-year student tag teams (a support system comprised of faculty members, peer mentors, advisors, student-affairs officials, and/or librarians, etc.) to identify and assist students. Many EWS also have academic-support staff members who provide information back to the program. These academic-support staff members are responsible for flagging students with academic difficulty, tracking and monitoring class attendance, drop/add information, early-semester and midterm grades and progress reports, and/or preregistration information, in order to identify and intervene when students begin to experience academic difficulties (Fontana et al., 2005; Kuh, 2007). For example, Fayetteville State University's EWS monitor students' academic progress and contact students' academic advisors when they notice students are struggling academically (Kuh, 2007). Mentors then contact/alert these students to advise and/or refer them to academic services/resources. It is vital that students are contacted early (at the first sign of academic difficulty), because timely and appropriate feedback equates to student learning

and academic success (Kuh et al., 2007). Through a metanalysis Kuh et al., (2007), assuredly states that early student-mentor contact offers students guidance and provides them with information regarding whether or not they are on track, so they can adjust to new situations and information; and/or change course along the multi-interactive educational pipeline.

In another example, Wheaton College in Massachusetts implemented a first-year student advising tag team made up of faculty, student preceptor, and administrative advisor, to assist students who showed signs of academic struggle (Kuh, 2007). As per Kuh et al., (2007), the best feedback is interactive, where teachers, staff, and students, engaged in conversations about student progress and performance. When institutions create effective partnerships between those who have the most contact with students (e.g., faculty, academic affairs, and student affairs professionals), it creates a campus culture where everyone communicates about student success (use diverse experiences and knowledge to reflect on student success); and become responsible for students' holistic development, persistence, retention, and academic success (Fontana et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2007).

Many institutions are requiring that faculty and staff become more proactive, and intervene the moment students begin missing classes and/or fail assignments. Stevenson, Buchanan, and Sharp (2006-2007) state that according to the NSSE, institutions that are high performing (have good retention rates) have faculty who are experts on students' learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. As a result, faculty and staff are being asked to play a more intentional role in students' persistence and academic success by monitoring students' grades and attendance, and notifying units (e.g., EWS) that can

intervene, when students begin to struggle academically (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2008; Fontana et al., 2005; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006-2007). Allensworth and Easton (as cited in Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2008), found through statistical analysis a strong correlation between course failure and overall GPA, attendance and graduation, and attendance and course failure. They also found that students with low GPAs or one failed course were very likely to drop out; and theorized, that students with one failed course could benefit from short-term mentoring, and students with multiple failures could benefit from more intense interventions.

Even though retention rates from first to second year were high at Southwestern University (approximately 80%), the institution decided to implement an inexpensive EWS to further increase its retention rates. During the third or fourth week of the semester, faculty members are sent course rosters and are asked to notify the Academic Services department when students earn a "C-" or below, have infrequent attendance, and/or academically underperform (Santovec, 2003). When the Academic Services department is notified of students' poor academic performance, students are then sent hard copy alert letters marked urgent, which outline the consequences of not obtaining good academic standing (a 2.00 or higher GPA). The letter also urges students to speak with their professors, attend campus resource referrals, and enroll in the workshop titled, Salvaging Your Semester. As per Santovec (2003), because the Academic Services department is frequently reported on many communications students receive, another name is listed on the alert letters mailed to students.

In addition to students receiving alert letters, students' academic advisors also receive copies of the alert letters. Additionally, letters are also sent to the students' home address during midterms, which describes the EWS program, encourage parents and students to discuss students' academic standing, and educate parents about available campus services and resources. Though the program is impressive, collaborative, and inexpensive to implement, the cost of mailing students hard copy alert letters during midterms (when majority of the semester has already been completed); as well as the process of sending parents letters during midterms, may pose problems associated with the cost of mailing the letters, not giving students enough time to salvage the semester, and/or privacy issues for some institutions. If institutions have data management systems that can incorporate EWS that provide students with hard copy alert letters, these processes would highly complement EWS. Institutions that do not have the budget to incorporate hard copy alert letters can use university or personal email, text message, and other electronic devices, as early warning notification alert systems to notify students and/or parents of students' academic standing.

The 2002 statistics from the Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis states that, more than 20% of all freshmen enrolled in college, fail courses during the first 4 to 6 weeks, because of excessive absenteeism (Hudson, 2005). To report, monitor, track, and notify students (and their advisors) when students have excessive absenteeism during the first 6 weeks of the Spring 2003 semester, Morehead State University in Kentucky, implemented a web-based email notification early alert excessive absenteeism warning system. The mission of the EWS at Morehead State University is very similar to the EWS mission at Southwestern University. The EWS at Morehead State University

notifies students (and their advisors) of students' excessive absenteeism, in order to reduce course drop out and/or course failure rates; as well as educate students about the importance of attending class, understanding the dropout/withdrawal process, etc. (Hudson, 2005). At Morehead State University, instructors completed the web-based notification form during the 2nd, 4th, and 6th weeks of the semester, and sent email notifications to the office of Academic Support and Retention (AS&R). AS&R then forwarded this information to the students' advisors, so students could be contacted by one of the following (advisor, AS&R representative, peer advisor, tutor, supplemental instructor, or residential staff) for remediation and/or counseling purposes (Hudson, 2005).

Results from the Morehead State University study indicated that 78 advisors (9 professional and 69 faculty), reported 216 students with excessive absenteeism during the 2nd, 4th, and 6th weeks of the semester. Of the 216 students who were reported, 91 responded when they were contacted by their advisors. 44 (48%) of the 91 students who responded, passed the course; 33 (36%) failed the course, and 14 (15%) dropped the course. The 14 (15%) students who dropped the course, dropped because of excessive absences. Also, a majority of the courses with excessive absenteeism (20 out of 25 courses), were General Education courses. It should be noted that this study is not a rigorous research study, because it lacks a true comparison group. All students in the study were given the intervention and were not compared to a group of students who were not given the intervention. The lack of a true comparison group, asserts that there is a great need for more research on this topic.

In 1981 to 1982, the Learning Skills Center at the University of California at Davis (UC Davis) piloted a tracking and academic EWS. This program is one of three programs designed to assist Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students who are historically at-risk students. Before the EWS component was implemented, all EOP students were required to attend a summer bridge program known as STEP (Special Transitional Enrichment Program). STEP is an academic support services network designed to improve EOP students' academic performance and retention. After evaluating the pilot, UC Davis realized that one semester was not enough time to remediate students and implemented a reduced course load program known as Individualized Study Program (ISP) to assist students. All EOP students were tracked their first year through the EWS; and students who earned one or more unsatisfactory grades (below C-, not participating [NP], or unsatisfactory [U]) were invited to interview with an academic advisor, who was also responsible for identifying candidates for the ISP program. Students who participated in ISP, were required to take less than 12 credits per semester, for 2 semesters; as well as participated in intensive basic skills development activities (Hunziker, 1984). The EWS at UC Davis operates on the premise found in retention literature that attrition due to academic difficulty, is closely related to pre-admission qualifications (Hunziker, 1984). For example, the lower the high school GPA or SAT score, the more likely students are to leave because of academic difficulty (Hunziker, 1984).

The EWS at UC Davis also operates on the premise that poor grades (especially when they are earned early in the semester) are good predictors of attrition (Hunziker, 1984). Even though statistical controls such as comparison analyses were used in this

quantitative study, the study lacks rigor. Hunziker (1984) advises the use of caution

when interpreting the results and making conclusions. This is because unavoidable

limitations in the design - -"the arbitrary assignment of students to comparison groups" -

- may have made the results inconclusive (p. 16). For example, while the EWS was

successful in meeting the three discrete and measurable tasks identified in the study

(identifying EOP students with one or more unsatisfactory grades, providing them with

advice and support services to address their academic problems, and directing those with

deficient math and language skills into the individualized study program), it was very

difficult to attribute the success to overall academic improvement and EWS participation.

Additionally, because it is typical for all students (including non-EWS and non-

interviewed EWS) to receive a variety of academic advice, it made it difficult to form two

distinct groups and assess the outcomes. Also, the students who were contacted were

most likely students from the STEP program who provided positive evaluations.

Hunziker (1984) did however state that, even though it is not possible to conclude with

certainty that the differences in retention rates are a result of the EWS intervention, there

is "evidence that the program was implemented as proposed and that most units of

academic advice resulted in successful outcomes indicates the EWS is making an

important intermediate step toward improving the retention rates of service recipients" (p.

3). As with similar EWS research studies discussed throughout this dissertation,

weaknesses in the studies demonstrate that there is great need for this dissertation study.

Assessment of the EWS at UC Davis showed:

- The system successfully identified students with unsatisfactory grades
- Approximately half of the students contacted went in for interviews

- Students recommended to tutoring, were twice as likely to be successful in the courses in which they were tutored

- Many followed their advisors' advice and dropped specified courses

- EWS students who received EWS advising services, had higher retention rates (e.g., 79% for the fourth quarter) than EWS students who did not (e.g., 69% for the fourth quarter)

- Retention rates of students who were interviewed in the EWS, were comparable to the retention rates of several non-EWS groups

- EWS students who were interviewed, had a 15 to 20 percent higher retention during the fourth quarter, than EWS students who were not interviewed

- 70% of the students interviewed re-enrolled for a fourth consecutive quarter, compared to 51% of the students who were not interviewed

- Compared to 65% of the students who did not attend the Summer STEP program, approximately 80% of the students who attended the Summer STEP program with unsatisfactory grades went in for an interview

(Hunziker, 1984)

Despite the numerous benefits identified by Morehead State University's excessive absenteeism EWS, some institutions are cautious about implementing similar programs at their institutions, because of the perceived fear that students may not like being tracked. To ease institution's fear, the study reported that even though students were surprised to learn their attendance was being monitored and they were being tracked by the early alert excessive absenteeism warning system at Morehead State University, they appreciated that someone cared enough to take time out of their busy schedule to

contact them regarding their attendance and performance. The institution discovered that because of perceived fear of how students might react and/or the stigma associated with attending class after excessive absenteeism, some students would not have returned to class if their fear was not reduced or eliminated through the program. The institution also discovered that faculty members were very receptive to participating in the program and receiving feedback on students' progress from the program. Other outcomes of the early alert excessive absenteeism program at Morehead State University are:

- Contact, communication, and collaboration, between students, advisors, and faculty are enhanced

- University-wide communication is improved

- Retention activities are enhanced

- Pass/failure rates are identified; and the number of students most likely to drop or fail a course due to excessive absenteeism, is reduced

- Disruptive behavior (s) is interrupted and eliminated

(Hudson, 2005)

At New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), administrators on campus are involved in the EWS (Gittman & Davenport, 1996). There is also strong support from faculty in all academic units. When students show signs of academic difficulty, faculty and EWS administrators collaborate to address the problem (s). In addition to remediation/learning laboratory support services available to all students, students identified by the faculty as at-risk are also assigned a no-cost peer tutor (students who have a 3.3 GPA or higher and who are recommended by the academic department) to help them get back on track academically. The Enrollment Management Office also

invites these students to meet with a counselor, before they begin to accumulate failing grades (Gittman & Davenport, 1996). The Dean of Students also reaches out to students during the first 6 weeks of the students' freshman year to identify and assist students who may be at risk for attrition when they face adversity (Gittman & Davenport, 1996). Counselors at NYIT who work with these students frequently reported that many students identified with adversity such as low-grades, also had psychological issues (e.g., sleep deprivation and nutritional deficiencies) because of the stress associated with those low-grades. These students needed assistance with effective time management, stress management/coping, and establishing healthy eating patterns (Gittman & Davenport, 1996).

The program at NYIT is formal, coordinated, integrated, and intrusive, with many individuals such as faculty, academic affairs, and student affairs, working together to assist students. The program also uses enhanced technology to track and assess the program and provide timely and effective feedback. Even though Perez's (1998) sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming strategies were used to sort students into homogeneous groups using the EWS; provide financial, college success seminars, personal approaches, counseling services, and other support to help students deal with life situations; use Tinto's social integration model to connect students with each other and the institution through peer and faculty mentors/programs; and transform students and the institution through remediation and other policy changes; this research study is very descriptive and lacks statistical controls. This lack of rigor was also implied in the researcher's recommendations for future studies. For example, the researcher recommends that various colleges collaboratively explore the use of and success of,

54

various retention strategies students use at the institutions; analyze the relationship between variables resulting from institutional climate; explore the effects of gender and area of academic concentration on attrition and retention; and collect data to compare the timing of students' decisions to withdraw and how particular support experiences impact this decision. The lack of statistical controls and rigor in this, and similar research studies, demonstrate a great need for further study.

Retention initiatives similar to those used at NYIT were also used at Vanderbuilt University. At Vanderbuilt University, the Dean personally contacted all first year students during the 4th and 5th weeks of the fall semester, and made follow-up calls during the spring semester. The personal outreach plan was established to create a relationship between the student and institution, translate retention theories into practice, identify students with problems or potential problems, and promote academic and social integration, among others (Brier, Hirschy, & Braxton, 2008). Phone logs generated from admissions applications were used to contact students at critical points in the semester - - when academic requirements and social challenges begin to mount (Brier et al., 2008). Notes were also written during each phone conversation as a reference for follow-up sessions with students. Below is a brief description of the process.

During the brief calls (usually two to three minutes), the dean identifies herself and her role at the college and then moves to questions about the students' initial experiences at the university. Students are asked about their academic and social transitions and about the types of activities, organizations, and services, they are accessing. Based on the students' responses, the dean may make a referral to a campus support service or may ask about study habits and make suggestions for alternative

approaches. If students seem particularly overwhelmed or disengaged, the dean will ask to meet with them one on one to offer further assistance.

Many institutions would reject this initiative because of the size of their student populations and the time required to contact students. The Dean at Vanderbuilt University states that, despite being labor-intensive, over time, the strategic retention initiative has proven to be an excellent investment, and can easily translate to different kinds of institutions (Brier et al., 2008). A phone call to students before academic requirements and social challenges begin to mount is a small price to pay, when taking into consideration the high cost of remediation and attrition. Additionally, a phone call from a prominent figure on campus, like the Dean, speaks volume of the university's concern for students as individuals rather than as identification numbers.

Vanderbuilt University has reported, without implying causality, that there has been an increase in first-to-second year retention rates (from 88% to over 95%), more than 3,400 phone conversations between the Dean and students, and increased interaction between students and the Office of Student Affairs, since implementing the personal outreach plan seven years prior to the outcomes (Brier et al., 2008). Similar to other research studies discussed earlier in the dissertation, this study is underdeveloped and lacks statistical controls. Without a rigorous study, it cannot be determined if the outcomes are due to the intervention, the Dean's support of the program and his/her influence on the Office of Student Affairs' participation, or the higher distinction of the incoming students.

Purdue University used a computerized algorithm model to determine how well a student is doing in a course (Rampell, 2008). When students log into their course's

website, an image of a traffic light appears, signaling their current status in the course. If students are doing well in the course, a green traffic light appears. When they are faltering in the course, a yellow traffic light appears. If they are failing the course, a red traffic light appears. According to Purdue University, the traffic cop is not the professor or teaching assistants; but rather the sophisticated computer algorithm that uses students' preparation going into the class (e.g., GPA and standardized test scores) and how often they log into the course's website, to predict when they are at risk of failing (Rampell, 2008). This entire process is referred to as data mining, and it is used to predict students who are most likely to drop out of a course; and intervene with these students before they find themselves in academic trouble (Rampell, 2008). For example, the course-management system will show a red or yellow light for students who are poorly prepared and do not use the website (Rampell, 2008). These students will also receive warning by mail, asking them to contact an instructor or outside person for help (Rampell, 2008). At-risk computer algorithm data showed that students in the biology laboratory course who were at moderate risk - - received yellow traffic lights and warning email notifications - - were more successful than a control group in the same course. Rampell (2008) also points out that thanks to the early warning system, the middle group who could slide either way (become B students or D students), slid into the B group.

The State University of New York at Buffalo also used a course data-mining process similar to the one used at Purdue University, for their engineering students. Seven variables, which include standardized math test scores, were used to predict students' success in the program. Students, who scored below 5 variables, were identified as at-risk, because they had a higher probability of failing out of the program

(Rampell, 2008). Those students were required to participate in extra-help sessions referred to as small groups, in order to improve their chances of succeeding in the course. Similar to many other at-risk programs, students were unaware they were placed into small groups because the institution classified them as at-risk. This is because the program did not want at-risk students to feel stigmatized (Rampell, 2008). Results from data analyzed in the study showed a 1/3 increase in graduation rates among engineering majors at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The above study by Rampell (2008) to predict at-risk students and improve retention through data mining at Purdue University and the State University of New York, lacks rigor. The lack of statistical controls and rigor in this, and similar research studies, demonstrate a great need for further study.

Nationally Normed Student Assessment Instruments (Used on a Broad-Based Level)

In addition to flagging excessive absenteeism, tag-teams, and course-based data-mining processes designed to identify at-risk students in order to help them successfully transition into the college and university environment and improve their persistence and retention rates, many institutions are also using broad-based data-mining processes (also known as nationally normed cognitive and/or noncognitive instruments) to assist students. Broad-based data mining processes are used to identify students' individual and collective reasons for attrition, level of expectation, level of academic and social integration, institutional and degree commitment, satisfaction with support services, and psychological adjustment. Nationally normed student assessment instruments are also used to predict the probability of students' persistence, retention, and graduation rates, in order to provide students with executive and study skills development, motivation and

self-regulation sessions, and/or counseling interventions (Davidson et al., 2009; Lenning et al., 1980). According to Davidson, Beck, and Milligan (2009), even though pre-admission screening, which uses pre-entry characteristics, are great at identifying at-risk students as noted in the predictive modeling system implemented at Ohio State University, problems still arise after students enroll; which if they go unnoticed or left unaddressed, can lead to numerous adjustment problems and the likelihood that the interventions will not assist students when they encounter many problems. Davidson, Beck, and Milligan (2009) make the claim that, an EWS that can detect adjustment difficulties before those difficulties lead to low grades or student departure should be implemented; and should include nationally normed learning, self-concept, locus of control, and learning and study strategies instruments.

For example, the University System of Georgia implemented a locus of control personality-test measure to determine whether or not students at the university felt they had control over their own fate; the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa required first-year students to live on campus, because broad-based data-mining analysis revealed that freshmen who lived off campus were at greater risk of attrition; South Texas College eliminated its late registration process because broad-based data-mining analysis revealed that late enrollees were more likely to fail or drop courses; and success coaches or mentors, were assigned to students identified by risk algorithm at Tifflin University, in order to help students with time management and communicating with professors (Rampell, 2008).

To gain a better understanding of the accuracy of nationally normed student assessment instruments to help college students transition into college, Texas State

University-San Marcos conducted a study during the Fall 2003 semester using the CIRP survey. All students who enrolled in the university were required to complete the CIRP survey during orientation, before they could begin classes the first semester. Data were collected from students who earned a 2.00 or higher GPA at the end of their freshman year, completed the CIRP survey, and gave the university permission to use their survey responses. Of the 3,139 students who started as freshman at the university during the Fall 2003 semester, 1,014 students were used for the study. A correlation matrix used to statistically analyze the survey results, did not show multicollinearity in any of the four models (all students, White students, Hispanic students, and African-American students). Wald statistics t-test and regression analysis, showed that first-year college GPA and cumulative hours earned significantly predicted college persistence for all freshman students, White freshman students, and Hispanic freshman students. Wald Statistics chi-square, t-test, and regression analysis, showed no significant predictors of freshman students' college persistence for African-Americans (Kiser & Price, 2008). As per Kiser and Price (2008), the sample size could have been the reason there were no significant predictors of freshman students' persistence for African-Americans. Results also showed that the most significant variable that correlated with persistence for the other groups was college hours earned during the freshman year. This finding could provide higher education institutions with a plethora of information regarding statistically significant factors that lead (or do not lead) to persistence. Information, that can be used to plan and design effective college programs, interventions, and policies that can increase persistence, academic and social integration, retention, and graduation for the entire freshman population and specified student populations/racial groups.

In a similar study conducted by Davidson, Beck, and Milligan (2009) at Angelo State University from Fall 2004 to 2005, the College Persistence Questionnaire was used to predict the persistence of 257 students from their freshman to sophomore year. Students completed the questionnaire, during weeks 7 and 11 of the first semester of the freshman year. Results using logistic regression, indicated that 146 (57%) of the 257 students persisted to the sophomore year. Of the 6 CPQ variables (academic integration, social integration, supportive services satisfaction, degree commitment, institutional commitment, and academic conscientiousness), Wald statistics also indicated that institutional commitment, academic conscientiousness, and academic integration, significantly contributed to predicting freshman students' retention/persistence. In addition to predicting persistence and retention, the CPQ is also used to identify at-risk students for individual counseling sessions at Angelo State University. Not only can the questionnaire be scored directly after it is taken, responses from the questionnaire can also reveal individual variables that contributed to their at-risk status, variables that need the most attention, and issues that need further exploration during individualized counseling sessions (Davidson et al., 2009). To quote Davidson, Beck, and Milligan "the CPQ enables counselors, advisors, faculty and policy makers to advance beyond a one size fits all approach to attrition by individualizing retention efforts at the level of the student and institution" (2009, p. 388).

Even though the above mentioned instruments do not directly benefit individual students, these measures provide institutional information, and the use of the instruments show institutional effort to identify student retention challenges. Nationally normed student instruments, used to identify students' individual needs and identify them for in-

61

depth counseling (e.g., success coaching or psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling), will be discussed in the next section of the literature review.

Nationally Normed Student Assessment Instruments (Used On An Individual Level)

Institutions have observed that students rely more on motivational factors and locus of control to predict their academic success; rather than, their performance on the SAT or ACT (Nauman, Bandalos, & Gutkin, 2003). Even though the SAT and ACT have always been viewed as the best predictors of academic success, recent studies on learning related variables now dispute this claim (Nauman et al., 2003). Others have found slightly higher estimates, but according to Nauman, Bandalos, and Gutkin (2003), only 10-30% of the variance in first-year college GPA is accounted for by standardized exams. Braxton and McClendon (2001), and Larose and Roy (as cited in Witherspoon, Long, & Chubick, 1999), also suggest that although pre-entry data (e.g., high school GPA, standardized exams) and demographic variables predict early retention, nonacademic variables such as effective problem-solving skills, social integration, positive self-concept, internal locus of control, and stress-coping factors, among others, may be better at predicting academic and social integration and college success. Discoveries such as these raise some important points; which are how to help students become self-regulated so they are more motivated, view academic tasks as useful and interesting, acquire positive academic self-concepts needed to actively engage in learning strategies, and continually use academic resources to achieve academic success.

To test how students identify with academics, Osborne (1997) used the Rosenburg Self-View Inventory. The sample consisted of 165 freshman and sophomore students in a rural community college psychology course in upstate New York. Because research

has shown that the first week of the semester greatly influences self-esteem, students were asked to complete the Rosenberg Self-View Inventory during the first week of the fall semester. High numbers on the inventory are synonymous with high levels of self-esteem. Results from the inventory showed a linear relationship between identification with academics and GPA at the end of the semester and after two years; and a linear relationship between identification with academics and academic standing at the end of the semester and after two years. This confirms that positive identification with academics is positively correlated with good academic outcomes and positive self-esteem. Not only was there a linear relationship at the end of the fall semester, but after two years of study, semester GPA for students in the upper quartile also increased linearly as a function of identification with academics and academic standing (Osborne, 1997). Results also showed that students in the lower quartile did poorly, when compared to students in the upper quartiles. For example, "those in the lower quartile accounted for 82% of those dismissed for academic cause, 100% of those on *academic* probation, and 63% of those who withdrew from *college* [italics added]" (Osborne, 1997, pp. 59-67).

In another study, Ting used the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), a nationally normed noncognitive instrument which measures motivational and learning strategy variables related to self-regulation, to study 54 first-generation students in a Midwestern public university (Nauman et al., 2003). Results from the study, showed that the majority of the variance in first year GPA was due to noncognitive/psychosocial variables and high school rank (Nauman et al., 2003). Results also showed that standardized exams (such as the ACT) did not significantly predict first or second

semester GPA (Nauman et al., 2003). This finding is significant, especially, considering the low importance often given to noncognitive variables.

Additionally, research studies on first-generation students also found strong correlations between learning strategies and first semester GPA (Nauman et al., 2003). In a study conducted to measure the self-worth of 214 entering first-generation college students, William and Hellman (as cited in Witherspoon et al., 1999), found strong correlations between first semester GPA and three strategies (finishing homework on time, concentrating on the subjects, and studying despite distractions).

In addition to studies on first-generation students, Nauman, Bandalos, and Gutkin (2003) also studied the relationship between learning variables and GPA, and learning variables and ACT scores, for second-generation students (students whose parents earned a bachelor's degree). This study was conducted to determine if a significant difference existed between first and second-generation students' learning variables, GPA, and standardized exam. The MSLQ, which measures five motivational variables (intrinsic goal orientation, task values, expectancy for success beliefs, control beliefs, and positive self-concept) and four strategy variables (study strategies, goal setting, seeking assistance from others, and time management); and which is very similar to other nationally normed noncognitive predictive instruments discussed below, was also used with second-generation students. Applied statistic (e.g., t-test, correlations) was used to analyze and compare data in this study. Results showed that the most significant variance for GPA for both groups (first and second generation students), included at least one of the self-regulated learning variables (e.g., expectancy for success, goal setting; Nauman et al., 2003). Nauman, Bandalos, and Gutkin (2003) state that, self-regulated learning variables

(as predicted by Pearson correlation in the study) are far better predictors of first and second-generation students' GPA. Both groups, particularly first-generation students who are historically at-risk, can benefit from academic services that enhance self-concept, strong internal locus of control, and internal motivation needed to learn and use learning and study strategies (Nauman et al., 2003).

The Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), a well known nationally normed instrument, was also used by many institutions to identify students who experience academic difficulty (Engle et al., 2004). The LASSI is a self-diagnostic tool, which consists of a 10-item subscale (anxiety, attitude, concentration, information processing, motivation, selecting main ideas, self-testing, study aids, test strategies, and time management) that is randomly assigned on a likert scale survey. It is often used as a pre-and-post test in individualized coaching, counseling, or advising programs; intervention and mentoring programs; probation recovery programs; success seminars; first-year learning communities; developmental courses; instructional courses; and/or college orientation courses, to help students avert (or overcome) academic problems by identifying deficits and strengths in study skills, metacognition, self-regulation, locus of control, and goal-setting (Engle et al. 2004; LASSI in Action, 2009).

A one year self-study was conducted using a sample of 436 first-year students enrolled in the FYE courses at Texas A & M International University, to explore the relationship between study skills, attitudes and strategies, and freshman academic success and first-year retention rates (LASSI in Action, 2009). These students were administered the LASSI as a pre-test in the FYE courses at the beginning of the Fall 2007 semester; and as a post-test in the continued FYE courses at the end of the Spring 2008 semester.

336 of the 436 students in the sample completed both the pre-and-post test. These students' pre-and-post test results were matched to determine increases in study skills, attitudes, and behaviors. When compared to grades earned in 2007, results from the LASSI questions showed no significant difference in LASSI gains between students with GPA below 2.00 and students with 2.00 to 2.99 GPA. There was, however, a significant difference in LASSI scores for students who earned 2.99 GPA and below, when compared to students who earned 3.00 GPA or higher. Students, who earned 3.00 GPA, had significantly higher gains in study skills, attitudes, and behavior. Additionally, when compared to those who persisted, there were significantly different scores on 7 LASSI questions within the following subscales on the pretest- - motivation, anxiety, concentration, and time management - - for students who dropped out before 2008 (LASSI in Action, 2009).

In addition to the LASSI, many institutions are also using the nationally normed student assessment instruments College Student Inventory (CSI), to identify at-risk students' pre-entry attributes, learning skills, and customer/student satisfaction; and provide students with individualized assistance. According to Tovar and Simon (2006) in their study, which used the CSI to theoretically support and test the 2 hour probationary re-orientation program pilot at the community college in California; of the multitude of instruments that currently exist to gather information about student background and satisfaction, the CSI instrument is the most widely used instrument because it measures:

    (a) academic motivation for staying in college (subscales: study habits,

        intellectual interests, verbal confidence, math and science confidence, desire

        to finish college, attitudes toward educators); (b) general coping (subscales:

family emotional support, sense of financial security, opinion tolerance, career

closure, sociability); (c) receptivity to support service (subscales: academic

assistance, personal counseling, social enhancement, career counseling,

financial guidance); and composite, predictable outcomes (dropout proneness,

predicted academic difficulty, degree of educational stress, and receptivity to

institutional help; Tovar & Simon, 2006, p. 552).

Ryan and Glenn (2002), strongly agree with Tovar and Simon (2006) that it is

imperative that at-risk students are identified early, in order to receive needed assistance.

As per Ryan and Glenn (2002), retention programs can be successful if probation at-risk

students can be distinguished from regularly admitted students, early in their first

semester; and before getting an academic probation stigma. Ryan and Glenn (2002)

conducted a five year study at an urban metropolitan university's comprehensive student

development and advising center designed to increase first-time freshman's one-year

retention rates. Quasi-experimental designs were used to explore a combination of

program resources (e.g., combining academic advising and academic support programs

such as tutoring, and learning skills workshops, among others). Stepwise regression

analysis of decision-satisfaction surveys were also used to measure each program's

impact on students' satisfaction with campus life, one-year retention rates, and

development of academic competencies that lead toward academic success. The

academic progress of approximately 4,703 first-time freshmen in good academic

standing, who were enrolled for 12 or more credits in the fall semester, were tracked to

explore the connection between academic performance and first-year retention rates, and

to determine if a probation-recovery program can improve one-year retention rates.

Results showed that 64% of these students remained in good academic standing at the end of the fall semester and re-enrolled for the following fall term, 32% were on academic probation at the end of the fall semester (of which, 25% did not return the following spring semester and 44% returned the following spring semester, but were dismissed at the end of the spring semester), and 4% withdrew from the university.

From the studies conducted, it can be concluded that even though first semester academic performance is a good predictor of one-year retention rates; and probation recovery programs are great at reducing dismissal rates (e.g., the Phoenix intervention program which uses advising-focused probation recovery workshop and counseling sessions; retaking courses to offset lower grades; and referrals to academic support programs such as tutoring, learning assistance workshops, and credit success seminar to rehabilitate students), waiting until the semester ends to assist students in difficulty, is not the best approach to improve retention rates. Earlier interventions/probation prevention programs; checkpoint programs (e.g., progress report after the first test in a course) that identify students' low grades early in the semester; and nationally normed learning, motivation, and study strategies instruments, will have a far greater impact on student learning, locus of control, learning and study strategies, satisfaction, academic standing, persistence, and graduation.

Even though many studies exist that support the claim made by Tovar and Simon (2006), that the CSI instrument is the most widely used instrument to gather information about student background and satisfaction, Ryan and Glenn (2002) caution against the use of such instruments and advocate for end of first-semester academic status, as the best predictor of one-year retention rates. In researching the CSI as a useful tool to

identify students for the probation-prevention program described above, Ryan and Glenn (2002) uncovered the following errors: false alarms (57 percent of the students who were above the CSI's midpoint retention-risk subscale and classified as high-risk, returned the following year) and misses (36 percent of the students who were below the CSI's midpoint retention-risk subscale and classified as low-risk, did not return the following year). Ryan and Glenn (2002) also observed that the "retention-risk index" may not be the best tool to motivate students to utilize available support services and programs. Also, recent studies by Muis, Winnie, and Jamieson-Noel (2007), on multitrait-multimethod analysis used to examine conceptual similarities of nationally normed student assessment instruments (e.g., main ideas/organization, elaboration; locus of control and evaluation and self-testing/critical thinking) in three self-regulated learning inventories (LASSI, MSLQ, and MAI [Meta-cognitive Awareness Inventory]), caution programs to be very careful in selecting the inventory (s) used to assess locus of control and self-regulated learning, study strategies, motivation, etc. For example, the LASSI mostly measures self-regulated learning (SRL) facets that focus on encoding processes, while the MSLQ measures SRL facets that focus more on motivational processes, and the MAI measures SRL facets that focus more on metacognitive processes (Muis, Winnie, & Jamieson-Noel, 2007).

Entwistle and McCune (2004) also caution that if nationally normed student assessment instruments are used to predict/identify at-risk students and provide adequate interventions; then the inventory should be brief. This is because many critics question the validity of students' responses on lengthy inventories. When inventories are lengthy, students are less likely to care about and take the time to complete the inventory;

69

students' responses are hurried and not always an honest reflection of their feelings or perception; and staff members are less likely to use the inventory (Entwistle & McCune, 2004). When the inventory is brief, however, students will take the time to complete the inventory; and the inventory will become a more effective tool when used in situated learning environment (e.g., individualized psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling and student success/life coaching) or planning successful retention programs and interventions.

The next section of the dissertation will be a closer look at how executive skills, Executive function, and noncognitive skills, can be improved through cognitive reorganization processes (CORE) that occur in situated learning processes such as EWS with psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling and student success/life coaching.

Executive Skills Function and Cognitive Reorganization

As discussed earlier, executive function requires three separate but interacting components (or cognitive functions): working memory (retrieving information stored in short term memory, through task initiation and task switching, in order to develop higher-order cognition), response inhibitory control (noncognitive factors), and correction of error when needed (memory updating; Cooper, 2009; Marcovitch & Zelago, 2009; Meltzer, 2007; Peterson et al., 2006; Rachal et al., 2007; Thorell et al., 2009). These three interacting components use prior knowledge and experience, current situational cues (current knowledge and experience), cognitive reorganization, and noncognitive factors, to help students contextualize intended actions (execute effective strategies, purposely plan and organize needed resources, multitask, increase metacognition, and

overcome the problem; Meltzer, 2007; Perez, 1998; Peterson et al., 2006; Rachal et al., 2007; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988).

Working memory (using information stored in short or long term memory to develop higher-order cognition) is very important to executive skills function, because it helps individuals transition from short-term memory (retaining and pondering information for a short time) to long term memory (retaining and pondering information for an extended amount of time; Engle et al., 1999; Thorell et al., 2009). According to Engle et al (1999), and Colom et al (2008), both short-term memory (STM) and working memory (WM) contribute to performance, which is formulated by Engle as, WM capacity = STM capacity + central executive or controlled attention + the error of measurement. Both STM and WM rely on central executive skills functions (or controlled attention), which is described by Engle et al (1999) as fluid intelligence. Memory that is limited by the amount of information it can address at once, is referred to as executive skills function or controlled attention. It is evident in higher order tasks (situations or transitions) that require working, rather than, short term memory. It is the process of using coding and rehearsal processes, when confronted with internal and external distractions and other competing information, to focus all energies on the current task (situation or transition; Engle et al., 1999). Successful and speedy retrieval is greatest when there is less interference (internal or external distraction) from competing information/tasks (Engle et al., 1999).

To be able to successfully solve problems and perform complex tasks, individuals need to have a clear understanding of how their mind actually functions. This involves engaging in metacognition and executive skills function (Downing et al., 2008). As per

Perkins and Grotzer (1997), when students undergo cognitive reorganization (CORE),

they will be able to acquire higher order practical and academic abilities (executive skills

and metacognition; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997; Rachal et al., 2007). Students need to be

encouraged to view themselves as proactive agents in the learning process. This is

because "behind self-regulation is a self and behind executive functioning is an executer"

(Paterson, Lavelle, & Guarino, 2006, p. 65).

Being taught learning strategies independent from content, is not very effective in

promoting executing and self-regulatory skills (Paterson et al., 2006). Despite this

knowledge, skills are still being taught independent from content (Paterson et al., 2006).

Cognitive reorganization, which leads to cognitive and noncognitive skills, can be taught

in situated learning environments such as Early Warning Systems (EWS). Thorell et al

(2009) makes the claim that, noncognitive development, and cognitive development

which includes the transfer of working memory held in the frontal lobe, can be improved

through training. This can be achieved either through specialized courses or workshops,

or individual student success/life coaching sessions designed specifically for this purpose.

According to Roth-van der Werf, Resing, and Slender (2002), the main goals of

education is to use active strategies and training/interventions to transfer

learning/working memory to new situations/tasks.

Working memory and inhibition/cognitive flexibility, are improved when training

includes attention to processes, such as executive skills and cognitive reorganization. For

example, in a SSS study by Webb and Brigman (2006), an SSS classroom and group

counseling intervention (referred to as The Student Success Skills program) was

implemented after extensive review of research about the use of a core set of

cognitive/academic learning, positive social outcomes, and self management skills, to achieve academic and social competence; which Webb and Brigman (2006) stated, could be taught (and learned) through such programs. The experimental group in the study participated in the Student Success Skills' 5 classroom guidance lessons, which were held once per week during the fall terms. Students who needed additional support, attended group counseling sessions (also known as booster sessions), which were held directly after the classroom guidance lessons to introduce key skills and strategies that connect test-taking and self-management skills learned in the sessions with specific test-taking tasks (Webb & Brigman, 2006).

Though not discussed in detail, Webb and Brigman (2006) cited the following student outcomes from the SSS study: increased motivation to learn, increased self-concept and effort, enjoyment when learning, and improved grades and test scores. These outcomes were measured/assessed using standardized statewide achievement tests and outcomes cited in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association), and the School Social Behavior Scale (SSBS; Webb & Brigman, 2006). These outcomes also suggest that school counselor led intervention resulted in improvements (Webb & Brigman, 2006).

If EWS are designed with inhibition/cognitive flexibility and the transfer of working memory in mind, academically at-risk students should undergo cognitive reorganization when assigned psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling through student success/life coaches who become their substitute (surrogate or lend-lease) frontal lobes in the early stages of development.

Psychotherapy/Psycho-Educational Counseling

Many EWS leaders are beginning to recognize the benefits of using trained professionals such as psychotherapy/psycho-educational counselors and/or student success/life coaches, in a therapeutic setting to identify and assist at-risk students. These individuals can help students recognize the gap between expectations and reality (e.g., transition situations/events such as academic and social integration, being in academic difficulty, and lacking executive skills and executive skills functions), recognize what caused the gap/transition event, the assets and liabilities they bring into the transition event, and any stress associated with the transition event. Schlossberg and others (1985) state that, when students face crisis situations (e.g., identifying the gap between expectation and reality), they are often confused and uncertain, and are in need of support systems/individuals who can communicate empathy and understanding; as well as readily help them use multiple strategies to successfully cope (e.g., understand the situation, change the situation and/or modify the situation) and transition through the situation/crisis. The research on psychological services indicates the appropriateness of these interventions.

Despite the above statement, and the claim made by Braxton, Brier, and Steele (2007), that counseling addressing student retention is guided by a philosophy that any student can be an at-risk student and can benefit from interventions, there are not substantial empirical research that identifies campus interventions with a built-in psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling component as approaches to address student retention. In addition, even though student success coaching is beginning to make its way into the retention literature (e.g., Midwestern Religious University's

academic advising life coach), and individual psychological processes have been identified as the catalyst for retention decisions (Bean & Eaton, 2001), few interventions focus on psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling and student success/life coaching geared toward executive skills function.

Sieveking and Perfetto (as cited in Braxton et al., 2007), found that when a clinically driven counseling intervention is in place for students who are at risk and considering withdrawing, it can be highly effective. This is because self-esteem, self-concept, locus of control, coping strategies, and other noncognitive skills; as well as academic skills development (e.g., learning, test taking, and study skills strategies) can be addressed in counseling interventions. According to Sieveking and Perfetto (2001), despite many unknowns, there is enough evidence to confidently state that a person with mental health training should be available to assist students who are considering withdrawing early in their decision-making process. Yet, counseling departments are being downsized or eliminated, when the need for more directive counseling services are rising (Perez, 1998). Perez (1998) states that, to address budgetary decreases, many institutions are now eliminating personal counseling and stressing academic and career advising, referring students to community agencies, relying on faculty and student success/life coaches to assist and advise at-risk students, and/or turning to technology for help (e.g., making aptitude and interest inventories widely available).

Even though enhancing retention is not the university's main reason for providing psychological clinical services, as pointed out by Sieveking & Perfetto (2001) and Perez (1998), logically it makes sense to evaluate the impact psychological clinical services have on retention because of their interrelatedness (e.g., locus of control, self-esteem,

cognition, and metacognition). Additionally, "individual counseling *and/or referral systems* within a university network [italics added], in a package of investigative and clinical services, can further retention while maintaining a neutral stance on the true reasons students choose to leave an institution" (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001, p. 341). Sieveking & Perfetto (2001) noticed that institutions with higher retention rates are those that focus on student-centered retention approaches that promote reasons for students to stay (e.g., addressing students' individual reasons through counseling). Research literature cited in Engle, Reilly, and Levine (2004), also noted that regardless of academic status, the academic progress and retention of students who underwent counseling, was better than the general student body; and students are even more successful in meeting their goals and enhancing their problem solving abilities when they have more support, especially when the supports are structured. For example, in a rigorous quantitative study, Hudesman, Avramides, Loveday, Waber, and Wendell (as cited in Engle et al., 2004) examined the impact of academic agreements in counseling sessions designed to foster academic improvement. In addition to being required to attend a set number of campus services they were referred to, at-risk students were also required to attend a set number of counseling sessions. Students who participated in the study showed improvement in GPA; which was even greater, when the counseling intervention included a contract.

Using information from this study, Engle, Reilly, and Levine (2004), reviewed two similar programs, one mandatory and one voluntary, that incorporated a counseling component, in order to determine their impact on GPA and retention. Wilke and Keilen (as cited in Engle et al., 2004), conducted the actual study for the mandatory program

76

over a three year period. Students in the mandatory program were required to attend not only structured study time and biweekly study skills seminars, but also biweekly individual counseling session at the university counseling center. Students, who participated in the voluntary program, were academically at-risk students (GPA below 2.00) from a mid-size comprehensive university. Once they agreed to participate, students were required to attend for 12 weeks, unmonitored study time and individual and group counseling sessions; as well as complete the Learning and Study Skills inventory (LASSI) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem inventory. These counseling sessions were conducted by trained graduate students, and focused on students' personal and academic issues, individual learning styles/study skills, self-esteem, and social competencies. The LASSI and Rosenberg Self-Esteem inventories, revealed the following self-reported reasons students gave for wanting to participate in the program (e.g., wrong major; issues with time management; personal/social issues; lack of motivation; learning disability; and acquisition of reading, writing, note-taking, and test-taking skills; Engle et al., 2004).

Quasi-experimental mixed design (data collected in three different semesters), statistical controls to establish intervention and control groups, dependent variables (GPA and attrition) examined in pairs of semesters to maximize sample size, and multiple hypotheses testing were used to conduct the study, collect and analyze the data, and provide research quality and rigor. The comparison for both studies included at-risk students who were given the intervention and at-risk students who were not given the intervention. Results from the mandatory program showed a 22% increase in the number of students who achieved a 2.00 or higher GPA, and a 33% increase in the number of students who achieved good academic standing, for the intervention group (Engle et al.,

2004). Results from the voluntary program, indicated that more students were retained at

the end of the first semester; 69% who participated in the program were in good

academic standing at the end of the Spring 2000 semester, compared to 43% who did not

participate in the program; and 55% who participated in the program were retained at the

end of the Fall 2000 semester, compared to 28% who did not participate in the program

(Engle et al., 2004). Students who participated in the program also had a higher GPA

than non-participants at the end of each semester, which continued throughout the course

of the study. Results from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem inventory post-test also showed an

increase in participant's self-esteem at the end of the study. Results from the LASSI

post-test, did not show an increase in learning and study skills for participants; which

Engle, Reilly, and Levine (2004) concluded may have resulted from the timing of the

post-test. According to Engle, Reilly, and Levine (2004), because the post-test was

conducted prior to final exams, students may not have spent enough time answering the

questions.

Sieveking and Perfetto (2001) discovered through a qualitative study of a

university's Psychological and Counseling Center (PCC), that students sometimes gave

pseudo reasons as defense mechanisms for leaving the institution. Counseling sessions

revealed distinctive reasons/issues why students are at high risk of dropping out

(Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001, p. 346). Retention programs, such as the PCC program, are

defined as individual-level, because its services focus less on the organization or student

body as a whole (identifying widespread student needs or large-scale deficiencies in the

institution), and more on the individual needs of students. It is an attempt to help

individual students who may be considering dropping out identify issues; and if possible,

have someone assist them with resolving the issues identified (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001). Students, who underwent psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling in the individual-level retention program at PCC, were less likely to withdraw from the university when compared to the general student population (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001). Individual psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling sessions (integrated as part of a larger campus intervention such as the EWS) should be used as retention tools, because collectively, they can provide data which can be used to address the larger issue of increasing institutional retention rates (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001).

Even though the individual counseling program at PCC was not an attempt to uncover widespread deficiencies as stated above, an accumulation of individual cases revealed that retention rates increased significantly with the number of psychotherapy sessions students underwent (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001). There is a strong linear relationship between personal counseling and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), when students undergo more counseling sessions (at least up to 6 or 7 sessions), they are more likely to persist. For example, in the PCC study, only 30% of the students who had one psychotherapy session were retained; while 75% of the students who had eight or more psychotherapy sessions were retained (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001). Also, many students considering withdrawal from the university really wanted to continue attending; however, they were faced with conflicting needs which they were unaware were conflicts (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001). As per Sieveking and Perfetto (2001), a student's decision to leave is often symptomatic of other issues; not necessarily a desire to withdraw from what the university experience offers. For example:

Longer-term work with depressed students suggests that they often have greater than typical difficulty meeting academic demands and developing a social life. Some present with rationales which put themselves at fault; e.g., they blame themselves as lazy, stupid, or unlikable. Others project blame, identifying inadequate teaching, social patterns, regional culture, or student body characteristics as factors evoking their desire to leave. Whether the depression is accompanied by lower or higher levels of academic ability or by inadequate or ample family financial resources provides further complexity. (Sieveking & Perfetto, 2001, pp. 347-348)

Students can need help from a trained professional to recognize the gap between expectations and reality (Hayward, 2008). In a study conducted at an Australian university's high school to college transition program, approximately 45% of the students who completed the survey stated that the standard of work expected at college, and how demanding college work was in comparison to high school, were much higher than originally envisioned (Farrell & Farrell, 2000). For those who decide to stay after recognizing the gap, they can be successfully guided through the transition process. There were no studies that showed a negative relationship between psychological services for at-risk students and student success; and compelling evidence that psychological interventions enhance student retention and students' academic success, was collectively derived from the studies.

In another study, in order to help Latino students who were on probation return to good academic standing so they are not forced to leave college or become discouraged and leave, Tovar and Simon (2006), piloted a 2 hour probationary re-orientation program

at a community college in California. This EWS pilot used Schlossberg's individual

transition theory of 4 S's and the College Student Inventory (CSI) demographic

questionnaire instrument, to theoretically support and test the pilot. Schlossberg's

individual (or adult) transition theory/model, proposes that in order to understand an

individual's development, there needs to be a closer look at the transition; event it occurs

in; and the individual's personal characteristics, psychological resources, and coping

responses (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg and others, 1985). In life,

transition results in change in behavior and perception of one's self or the world (Dean &

Eriksen, 1984; Schlossberg and others, 1985). The trigger (what caused the transition

event), timing, internal and/or external source, role change, duration (temporary,

permanent, or uncertain), previous experience with similar transitions, and other stresses

the individual experiences while going through the transition event, must all be taken into

consideration during the transition process (Dean & Eriksen, 1984; Schlossberg and

others, 1985). Schlossberg makes the expert claim that certain assets and liabilities are

brought into the transition process by each individual, which fit into one of the 4 S

categories/scales listed below:

- Situation – What kind of situation/transition is it, is it voluntary or non-voluntary,

  what is occurring (occurred) at the time; and what is the level of control

  individuals have over it, and the extent to which it changes routines, assumptions,

  and/or relationships?

- Self – What is the person's internal world/life balance during the situation/transition, strengths and weaknesses brought to the situation/transition, and the level of optimism to deal with the ambiguity of the situation/transition?

- Supports –Does the individual use/have adequate support from (or established supportive relationships with) family, friends, professionals at the institution; and in what ways do these sources help (or hinder) the individual's ability to cope with the situation?

- Strategies – what approach (s) is used during and after the planning process to cope with the situation, what is the extent to which negotiation/assertiveness is used to select the most suitable strategy (s), and what reappraisal (e.g., shifting blame from themselves) and stress management (e.g., jogging or meditating to cope with the event) are used to change the situation?

<div align="right">(Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg, 1990; Schlossberg & others, 1985**)**</div>

For example, at-risk students differ from non at-risk students in terms of how academically motivated they are, their general coping skills/strategies, how they perceive and react to personal and university support services, and the assets and life stresses/liabilities (e.g., biological, personal/psychological, physical/environmental, and social/cultural) they bring or encounter in the at-risk situation/transition (Goodman & Pappas, 2000; Schlossberg, 1990; Tovar & Simon, 2006;). All of these differences during the situation/transition, calls for psycho-educational counseling interventions to identify strengths and weaknesses, manage the situation, and successfully transition

through the multiple transitions of being academically at-risk. To quote Sargent and Schlossberg,

> People face transitions throughout their lives and with each transition- -whether good or bad, anticipated or unanticipated - - they become introspective and take stock. They ask themselves continually, who am I? Do I belong? Do I matter? Am I in control of my life? Can I master new tasks? Am I burned out? How can I renew my energies? (1988, pp.58-60)

In their study, Tovar and Simon (2006) use Schlossberg's transition theory and the CSI to assess how minority students differ from other students in terms of academic motivation, general coping skills/strategies, and receptivity to support services; in order to help Latino students on academic probation actively evaluate these variables during counseling interventions, so they gain a better understanding of how their background characteristics and college perception influence their academic standing. Dean and Eriksen (1984) make the claim that many students are aware of issues (situations/transitions) affecting them, but are often confused. Psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling interventions that use Schlossberg's transition theory to teach students (either through a one-on-one or group session, workshop, or course) how to develop and maintain the skills (e.g., cognition, self-concept, motivation, coping) needed to master change and help themselves successfully transition, may be highly effective in EWS (Dean & Eriksen, 1984; Schlossberg, 1990). This is because of the perceived benefits of the model in helping students master change and adjust to new and different situations by:

- Approaching change - determining to what extent the changes (good or bad) are in their lives; and assessing the degree to which their roles, relationships, routines, or assumptions have been altered by change, in order to discern how much they will need to learn to cope effectively

- Taking stock of change - identifying one's own resources and deciding which resource(s) needs to be strengthened

- Taking charge of change - devising ways to enhance resources that need strengthening, in order to successfully transition through college.

(Goodman & Pappas, 2000; Schlossberg, 1990)

Strategies such as approaching change, taking stock of one's resources, and taking charge; along with the remaining 3 Ss (situation, self, and support) discussed earlier, are vital to students successfully mastering change. Students who have a good understanding of the 4 Ss needed to successfully transition through and master change, will become more academically and socially resilient; have more positive and supportive supports/relationships, routines, assumptions, self-concept, locus of control, and roles; and have more strategies they can use to navigate, manage, cope with, and maintain stability in the college environment (Goodman & Pappas, 2000; Schlossberg, 1990; Tovar & Simon, 2006). This concept supports the claims made earlier that individualized approaches such as student success/life coaching that focus on heightened executive skill function, and highly trained college psychotherapy/psycho-educational counselors who are cognizant of students' diverse and complex issues, crisis situations, lack of academic self-concept and motivation, etc., are vital to the success of EWS (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

Tovar and Simon (2006) make the claim that showing care and teaching students how to manage their time and learn how to study is not enough. They also make the claim that counselors also need to be able to assess and meet high-risk students' multiple and complex needs, which are pertinent to their academic and personal success (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

The study conducted by Tovar and Simon (2006) was a very rigorous study, with numerous statistical controls. Students who volunteered to participate in the quantitative study were required to provide informed consent, complete two instruments - - the CSI and an 11-item Demographic Questionnaire, attend a two hour probationary student reorientation session, and attend small group and individual counseling sessions to discuss the factors impacting their probationary status. Students' level of participation and developmental issues were monitored and tracked; and a holistic assessment of students' issues (e.g., personal, academic, financial) was conducted by professional counselors. The two instruments were analyzed using descriptive and multivariate statistics. The CSI scales were matched against gender and ethnicity, and differences were compared across ethnic groups and gender. The variables, in which probationary students differ, were also identified. Statistically significant differences were found on the following CSI scales: readiness/commitment to college (e.g., Latinos were more likely to drop out, African Americans were more likely to anticipate academic difficulties, and Asians were more likely to accept institutional assistance), academic motivation (e.g., African Americans had a more favorable attitude toward educators, and "Caucasians [*sic*]" had higher verbal confidence), and perceptivity to institutional assistance (e.g., Asians were more likely to discuss personal issues with counselors and

need assistance with social enrichment, and African Americans and Latinos were more receptive to academic assistance).

The findings in the above mentioned study, support the need for trained counselors who are cognizant of transition processes, and who can assist students with multiple and complex issues. Trained professionals who are cognizant of transition processes (e.g., psychotherapy/psycho-educational counselors, student success/life coaches), and who can successfully help students move in (become aware of the transition event or non-event), move through (experience the effect of the transition in terms of the 4 Ss), and move on (enter post-transition with positive self-concept and strong internal locus of control), will significantly impact Early Warning Systems (Tovar & Simon, 2006). "Counselors need to be trained to give away what they know, to teach people to help themselves and each other" (Schlossberg, 1990, p. 7). Counselors need to also help students anticipate and recognize potential difficulties; as well as put things into perspective, in order to learn how to deal with difficulties (Dean & Eriksen, 1984).

To summarize, this section of the dissertation on psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling illustrates how frequently retention programs that rely on psychological processes show positive results. The data that psychological processes are important is rather conclusive. With this realization, why is there still such an immense disconnect between retention programs such as EWS, and psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes? Also, why is there such an immense disconnect between EWS and executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills, and improving executive skills through psychotherapy/psycho-educational counseling processes such as student success coaching.

Student Success Coaching

As discussed earlier in the dissertation, working memory and inhibition/cognitive flexibility, are improved when training includes attention to processes, such as executive skills and cognitive reorganization (CORE). If EWS are designed with this kind of transfer in mind, academically at-risk students should undergo cognitive reorganization when assigned student success/life coaches who become their substitute (surrogate or lend-lease) frontal lobes in the early stages of development. To quote Sargent and Schlossberg:

> The *Success Coach* is a gardener tilling the soil in which *students* grow and develop. The *Success Coach* is an orchestra leader coaxing excellence and building a harmonious team. Above all the *Success Coach* is a role model and developer of people…*students* [italics added] will imitate the behaviors of their Success Coach if they trust them. (1988, pp. 58-60)

Success coaches determine at-risk students' executive skills deficit on specific tasks/activities; as well as, guide their executive skills function through individualized coaching sessions (Dawson & Guare, 2004). Success coaches help compensate for students' incomplete development/deficiencies by lending them their frontal lobes/executive skills during the apprentice stage (the stage where students are reluctant or hesitant to use the executive skills they have), in order for students to successfully develop and utilize executive skills during the master stage (the stage where students' pre-frontal lobes are fully developed; Dawson & Guare, 1997). During each coaching session, students learn strategies, review previous plans, evaluate how successful they are in following the plans, creatively reorganize their thinking, and create new plans.

Through coaching sessions, students learn how to integrate executive skills during the apprentice and master stages using the 3 parameters of executive function: Hills (connecting current experiences with future goals), skills (abilities and techniques, such as executive skills function, metacognitive activities, and learning and study skills strategies, needed to attain goals), and will (positive attitude, strong motivation, internal locus of control, and self-regulation, needed to begin and persist at a task despite adversity, until the goal is achieved; Dawson & Guare, 2004; Downing et al., 2008; Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Meltzer, 2007). Two qualitative research studies that assert that individual coaching increases executive skills are described below.

In a study conducted by Swartz, Prevatt, and Proctor (2005), one students' involvement in the executive coaching program at Southeastern university was used to illustrate how assistance from a trained coach, can help students with executive skills deficit (e.g., Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) learn to identify strategies needed to independently develop structures *(internal and external)* [italics added] that address executive skills deficit. Swartz, Prevatt, and Proctor (2005), state that the hyperactivity portion of ADHD, often associated with children, is less apparent in adulthood; and in adults, ADHD is associated with "inattention, impulsivity, disorganization, and a lack of self-regulation," which negatively impacts their academic, social, occupational, and emotional functioning (Swartz, Prevatt, & Proctor, 2005, p. 647). Adults with ADHD frequently exhibit low self-esteem, greater academic underachievement, antisocial behavior, relationship difficulties; mood, affective, and personality disorders; difficulty focusing on immediate task and failure to utilize academic coping strategies.

The single participant for this study was diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety disorder, and depressive episodes four years prior to participating in the program at a large Southeastern university. In addition to continuing with psychological counseling with a therapist to address anxiety and depression issues, the student referred herself to the 8 week executive function coaching program, because she struggled with procrastination, concentrating in class, time management, impulsivity, and decreasing motivation to succeed academically. During the initial meeting with the executive function coach, the student completed two pre-test: the LASSI and the Coaching Topics Survey (a self-assessment instrument designed for the case study, in which participants use a scale of how much they need to work on an item, to rate aspects of their academic and personal lives). The same instruments were also used to conduct post-tests after the 8 week program. Over the course of 8 weeks, the student met with the coach on a weekly basis; received frequent phone calls from the coach; used rewards and consequences to motivate herself to stay on track; and learned how to use week long calendars and logs to create, chart, and track short and long-term goals, objectives, and upward trends. The following areas on the student's Coaching Topics Survey, were identified as goals and objectives: "improving time management, establishing routines and good habits, organizing schoolwork, studying, keeping track of things, paying attention in class and taking good notes, managing long-term assignments, planning and prioritizing, and waking up and staying up" (Swartz et al., 2005, p. 652).

For the above mentioned study, results of the Coaching Topics Survey pre and post-test, showed an increase in 8 of the 9 areas and no change in one area (managing long term assignments). The following areas on the LASSI were identified as goals and

objectives: "time management, concentration, selecting main ideas, study aids/support techniques, self testing, and test strategies" (Swartz et al., 2005, p. 652). LASSI pre and post-test comparison showed improvements in four of the seven goal areas (concentration, time management, study aids, and test strategies), no change in one area (motivation), and decreases in two areas (selecting main ideas and self-testing; Swartz et al., 2005). Additionally, the student "exceeded her study goals for 4 out of 7 weeks, with the graph over time showing a positive trend in her goal attainment *(e.g., obtaining a B in the class she was originally struggling in)* [italics added]" (p. 653).

Swartz, Prevatt, and Proctor (2005), concluded that even though there are limited empirical studies to authenticate its effectiveness; and psychological or social-emotional difficulties/problems are not addressed directly, executive function coaching has the potential to be effective and warrants further study. This is because executive function coaching goes beyond course load and study skills assistance. Coaching "helps students deal with aspects of their disability that interfere with academic performance and coping with aspects of the college experience" described earlier in the case study (Swartz et al., 2005). More research is needed regarding whether or not coaching leads to sustainable and generalizable changes in behavior, non-self-report assessment measures' (e.g., course assignments) impact on assessing behavioral changes, and the differing levels of contact (e.g., fading out contact at the end of the session and limited contact before the 6 week follow-up session) and the timing of the intervention's impact on outcomes (Swartz et al., 2005).

Parker and Boutelle (2009) agree with Swartz, Prevatt, and Proctor (2005), that there is "pervasive impairment in the self-regulation of behavior and affect due to

developmental difficulties with executive function" (p. 204). Students with executive

skills deficit, are in need of intensified support services to activate and develop the

executive skills needed to manage challenges and the rigors of college life. Parker and

Boutelle's (2009) research study focused on the impact executive function coaching had

on the self-determination, self-regulation, and academic success of students with

executive function deficits; and whether or not, significant improvements were made in

time management, anxiety, motivation, and test preparation. Three full-time executive

functions coaches and the Director of Coaching Services (all of whom have extensive

training, development, supervision, and International Coaching Federation certifications),

provided coaching at Landmark College. Using a phenomenological approach, Parker

and Boutelle (2009) explored students' insight about their coaching experiences and how

the coaching model impacted their goal attainment. Three questions were investigated in

this study: what motivates students to try and then persist (or not persist) with coaching,

how do students compare coaching to other support services, and what (if any) benefits or

limitations do students associate with coaching?

A purposive and diverse sample of 7 students (3 female and 4 males), was

selected from a group of 54 students. Quantitative data (e.g., demographic data form,

cumulative grade point averages [GPA], and the 92 item Self-Determination Student

Scale [S-DSS], which comparatively measure students' levels of determination) was

collected for these 54 students. The 54 students were selected from 187 students who

voluntarily utilized coaching services during the 2006-2007 academic year. Six of the

seven participants were assigned to and completed, two semistructured one-hour

interviews with one of the three coaches. The Director of Coaching did not participate in

the interviews. Also, the remaining student only completed the first interview. Interviews were held toward the middle of the fall and spring semesters; and included an initial interview, and a second interview which reiterated key themes and utilized probing to further explore topics identified in the first interview. Data were analyzed using coding and categories that connected broad based themes; comparison of themes and behaviors across groups, concepts, and observations; reflective processes such as bracketing (e.g., categorizing, grouping, and clustering) to interpret the data without imposing own belief; triangulation of data to confirm participants' truthfulness and observations; and reliability checking of transcripts by a faculty with extensive knowledge of the coaching model.

In terms of emerging themes, the following reasons students gave for beginning the study are: coaching could help develop executive skills and achieve academic success, prior coaching experiences (or other people's perception) were positive, and the cost of coaching is already included in their tuition. Students, who continued coaching, stated they continued it because it helped them accomplish goals and created positive emotional experiences. Students who discontinued coaching, stated they discontinued coaching because they had developed better self-regulation skills, were able to begin coaching themselves, could plan and carry out goal-related behaviors, and could assess their independent functioning (learn from experiences).

Emerging themes regarding the perception of the coaching program's benefits and how it compares to other services include: it is a transformational process that helps students identify barriers (intrinsic and extrinsic) that impede goal attainment, identify campuses resources to achieve goals, and manage executive function challenges.

Coaching is also more personalized and collaborative, coaches have a greater understanding of how students achieve goals, it provides a trusting and honest relationship, and it is a less stressful environment to modulate and manage negative emotions arising from executive function difficulties. Additionally, coaches use inquiry to help students activate their executive function skills; improve inner speech/self-talk needed to question and coach themselves; increase on-tasks behavior which reduces stress; and enhance self-awareness, self-determination, self-motivation, autonomy, and accountability.

In terms of limitations, the following logistics were identified: not enough time allotted for coaching, incompatible personalities, high expectations of immediate results, not fully understanding the coaching model, and coaching as less didactic than expected. Despite these limitations, many students continued with coaching, because "coaches can serve as a therapeutic setting or container for students as they navigate the developmental self-management tasks embedded within a rigorously academic undergraduate program" (p. 212).

Despite limitations of the study (e.g., findings cannot be generalized from the interviews and students' reflections were self-reported), Parker and Boutelle (2009), made the expert claim that coaching has the potential to benefit students, as indicated above. Parker and Boutelle (2009) also recommend that future studies be conducted with control groups to determine if ADD coaching lead to higher GPAs for participants, when compared to non-participants; determine if students who are coached, increase self-talk needed to independently coach themselves; and determine using longitudinal studies, if

students who became self-regulated and self-determined through coaching, persisted with these attributes once they were no longer receiving coaching services.

As illustrated above, students are in search of intelligence (the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge), which interventions help them acquire and apply (Dickman & Stanford, 2002). Therefore, it is extremely important that adults (e.g., student success/life coaches) and programs (e.g., EWS) intervene at the apprentice stage and use supports, controls, schedules, among other things, to modify the environment (Dawson & Guare, 2004). This will help students undergo perceptual shifts such as proactive acquisition, conscious reflections, and refinement of knowledge, that lead toward change in perspective and behavior; all of which, require cognitive reorganization (Dawson & Guare, 2004; Meltzer, 2007). One cognitive reorganization approach that student success/life coaches can use in coaching sessions to help students change behavior and transition from the apprentice to master stage, is the seven-jump approach (Downing et al., 2008). This approach is used in situated contexts, to help students "actively clarify terms and concepts not readily understood, define the problem, analyze the problem, summarize the various explanations of the problem into a coherent model, formulate learning objectives, identify individual study activities outside the group/session, and report and synthesize the newly acquired information" (Downing et al., 2008, p. 614)

Change in behavior leads to successful movement from the apprentice stage (surface approach to learning and external locus of control) to the master stage (deep approach to learning and internal locus of control), where hills, skills, and will are internally developed, self-regulated, proficient, automatic, and used to exert less energy to overcome adversity and achieve goals (Dawson & Guare, 2004; Entwistle & McCune,

2004; Lonka et al., 2004; Meltzer, 2007). During the masters' stage, students develop triarchic intelligence; exhibit mindfulness and become experts at managing their executive function; and develop noncognitive and metacognitive skills that can be applied to self, systems, and academic or social situations (Dickman & Stanford-Blair, 2002; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997; Peterson et al., 2006). In a study on managing adult transitions, Sargent and Schlossberg (1988) proclaim that individuals will confront a myriad of problems, which is why it is so important to have a good understanding of the nature and nurture of intelligence and adult transition behaviors, in systems and situations.

In addition to the seven-jump approach just described, success coaches can also use metacognitive questioning to encourage cognitive reorganization and the use of the frontal lobe. Metacognitive questioning helps students become more active, responsible, and productive learners (Smith et al., 2007). For example, metacognitive questioning help students become actively involved when metacognitive knowledge (e.g., what is known about how one learns and processes information) and metacognitive regulation (e.g., what study skills strategies can be used to monitor, control, and regulate what has been learned) are used in the coaching session. Metacognitive questioning also encourages students to probe further thinking by articulating their point, being more reflective when they study (e.g., crystallizing their ideas and viewpoints), and showing more responsibility for their own learning (establishing a positive self-concept, locus of control, etc.; Smith et al., 2007).

In addition to understanding how they learn and can successfully transition to the master stage, students also need to learn a wide range of study skills/strategies during the

apprentice stage (Downing et al., 2008; Proctor et al., 2006; Rachal et al., 2007). As per Proctor et al., (2006), study skills are significantly related to college GPA and academic performance, which can be addressed in EWS.

In summary, there is currently a gap in research on the topic of cognitive and noncognitive factors and the subsets of executive skills and executive skills function and their role in EWS, which this dissertation will help fill. As noted in the literature review, many research studies on cognitive and noncognitive factors/skills are underdeveloped or are not studied in conjunction with EWS, psychotherapy and psycho-educational counseling and its relationship to student success, and student success coaching, even though research literature points to cognitive and noncognitive factors/skills as contributing to student learning; adjustment, integration, and development; and academic success; and multi-faceted interventions contributing to a culture of enforced student success. If cognitive and noncognitive factors/skills are studied in conjunction with EWS, the studies fail to incorporate executive skills, executive skills function, and cognitive reorganization (CORE) as retention strategies.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods are used to explore the phenomenon through the eyes of the administrators, of what they perceived students were experiencing in the EWS, and the services they provided and did not provide to assist students in these programs. The research and interview questions, qualitative methodology design, researcher's autobiography, population, and data collection and analysis procedures, are included.

Research Questions

While many unanswered questions remain about interventions for students, this dissertation was a qualitative study of EWS at two 4-year institutions (one public and one private). The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

1. What are institutions doing to improve retention in EWS?

2. (a) How are assessment measures used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address, students' issues or deficits in EWS?

   (b) Are university services and critical departments such as EWS, working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students?

3. What are administrators' perspectives of students' experiences, development, and retention issues?

4. Do EWS meaningfully address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes consistent with research evidence?

5. Do EWS meaningfully address students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills consistent with research evidence?

Qualitative Methodology Design

A qualitative research was used for this study because it would allow for the exploration of the phenomenon through the eyes of the administrators, of what they perceived students were experiencing in the EWS, and the services they provided and did not provide to assist students in these programs. Qualitative research allowed for more exploratory and insightful questions for the purposes of developing a richer depth of knowledge and understanding that cannot be achieved through statistical software (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

A phenomenological qualitative research approach was the methodology used for this dissertation study. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define a phenomenological qualitative research approach as an "attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations" (p. 23). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), phenomenologists "attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects . . . [through participant's perspectives] to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives." (p. 23). Interviews and document analysis were used as research methods for this phenomenological study (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Honan & Rule, 2002). In one-on-one interviews, in contrast to interviews in group settings,

individuals may be less apprehensive to reveal facts, present conflicting viewpoints and perspectives, discuss certain topics, or provide feedback on how to resolve complex problems. Therefore, individual phenomenological interviews were used to allow information to flow from the data, rather than being influenced by a group setting (Hand & Payne, 2008). Documents were also used in this study to explore the phenomenon, because original source materials help to capture and illustrate the perceptions of the reality/situation (Honan & Rule, 2002).

Phenomenological interviews and document analysis methods provided a comprehensive, holistic, expansive, rich, and thick descriptive view of EWS. To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon or multiple realities constructed socially by the administrators, a deductive (or testing) mode of inquiry was used to interpret the data (Merriam, 1998). Data interpretation and summarization of findings were categorized into large categories identified through Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms, and translated through Perez's retention strategies. Patterns and themes, derived from small units of data, were used to test the large categories identified (Whitt, 2001). Emerging themes were also used to summarize and write the findings (Whitt, 2001).

Researcher: Autobiography

Autobiography

The idea for this study arose through the researcher's readings and critical reflection of at-risk students while in the graduate program, which was further enhanced by doctoral courses on student development and administration. The methodology later arose through a qualitative research course in the doctoral program. As a research

instrument, the researcher brought approximately 11 years of experience in higher education to this study - - 4 years in Enrollment Management working with diverse programs; 3 years as an Academic Advisor working with all undergraduate students (including students on warning and probation); and 4 years working collaboratively with the Retention, Academic Advising, Student Support Services, and Title V programs, to assess undergraduate student retention. Being an "insider" (a person with direct experience in the field and the research knowledge gained through qualitative research courses), was helpful for conducting interviews and analyzing data for this study. It was also useful when transcribing, coding, and interpreting the resulting data.

Assumptions

The following assumptions existed prior to beginning the study: (a) freshman population homogeneity in 4-year higher education institutions; (b) students possess diverse skills/abilities and/or issues/deficits; (c) at-risk students enter institutions with issues/deficits, thereby possibly lacking executive skills functions; (d) executive skills development through psycho-therapy/psycho-educational processes such as counseling, student success coaching, etc., contributes to student success; (e) EWS that includes psycho-therapy/psycho-educational processes are programs offered frequently at institutions; (f) university services that work together to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address at-risk students' issues/deficits tend to be successful in developing, retaining, and graduating at-risk students; (g) administrators receive training to work with EWS and at-risk students who lack executive skills functions; (h) administrators' philosophy/theories drive their institution's EWS programming; and (i) institutions are

100

doing what they say they are doing to assist at-risk students with executive skills development.

These assumptions were used to ask probing questions during the interviews and document analysis. However, the assumptions were also put aside to avoid potential researcher bias when analyzing, interpreting, and summarizing the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Hossler and Bean's retention theory/paradigms, and Perez's retention strategies, were used to analyze, interpret, and summarize the data.

Journal

The researcher kept a journal to detail the steps taken before and after each interview, personal experiences and reactions with each interview and its contents, and reactions to the contents of the documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Recording a journal not only helped the researcher to reveal own biases, but it also became useful for connecting themes, explaining findings, and summarizing and finalizing the data. Additionally, taking brief notes during the interviews helped to identify probing questions for the current (and/or future) interviews. Taking brief notes directly after the interviews, also helped to identify and connect emerging themes, and/or identify any contradictions between emerging themes/interviews; as well as, draw from prior knowledge/theories to analyze and summarize data, and explain findings.

<div align="center">

Population and Sample

</div>

The following section includes a description of the dissertation study's population and purposive sampling as a guide to collecting data. For triangulation purposes, the data were acquired from multiple sources (e.g., diverse institutions and administrators).

Purposive sampling was employed by selecting two Florida higher education institutions (Institution X and Institution Y) that met certain characteristics related to the study's purpose (Merriam, 1998). By selecting two institutions, this permitted more in-depth interviews and analysis. The institutions selected for the study were accredited; public and private; 4-year (because of the greater homogeneity of the freshmen population); similar in size; and diverse in location, race/ethnicity, etc. A list of Florida higher education institutions that fit the criteria listed above (e.g., one public and one private, 4-year, similar in size) was generated from the Internet; and the first institutions (one public and one private) that gave verbal consent were selected for the study.

A sample of 12 administrators (6 from each institution) who oversee or work with EWS was selected to be interviewed for this study. They included directors who oversee EWS in the two institutions selected; as well as a range of others (e.g., psychotherapy/psycho-educational counselors, academic advisors, coordinators, and/or student success life coaches) who assist EWS at these institutions; and/or other administrators (e.g., registrar, admissions) who do not work directly with EWS, but who were familiar with EWS and at-risk students. Pseudonyms were used to replace personally-identifying information such as the names of the institutions, administrators, and documents, etc.

Instruments

The following section includes a description of the instruments (interviews and documents) used for this dissertation study.

Data sources consisted of phenomenological interviews (audio recorded and hand written notes) and documents that were relevant to the study. Lincoln and Guba (as cited

in Whitt) defines data sources as "any written or recorded material not prepared for the purposes of the research or at the request of the inquirer" (2001, p. 447). Examples of document data sources included "printed and other materials relevant to a study, including public records, personal documents, and physical artifacts" (Merriam, 1998, p. 70).

Interviews

Merriam (1998) defines interviews (person-to-person or group) as conversations with a purpose. The main purpose of the person-to-person interviews in this study was to obtain specific information from administrators and/or coordinators, psychotherapy counselors, academic advisors, and/or student success/life coaches, etc., regarding what they perceive students were experiencing in the EWS, and the services they provided and did not provide to assist students. The aim was to understand how administrators make sense of students' experiences in the EWS (Merriam, 1998). Multiple interviews were conducted to gain diverse perspectives; and document analysis were conducted in conjunction with the interviews to validate the phenomena, look for contradictions and confirmations between the various data sources, and validate the phenomena observed through the data sources. Both interviews and document analysis also provided rigor and quality of study.

Documents

Documents were used in conjunction with the interviews to collect data that were descriptive, of public record, natural to the setting, very descriptive, and concerned with the process of meaning construction employees made of EWS and students who participated in these systems at their institution (Bogdon & Biklen, 1998). Data sources,

in the form of EWS documents included: (a) documents obtained from the institution's websites; (b) department mission statements; (c) course catalog; (d) brochures/pamphlets; (e) program assessment data; (f) evaluation survey instruments; (g) advising manuals; (h) student success coaching manuals; (i) surveys; (j) student success coaching/tutoring stories, and/or (k) freshman/first-year experience seminar/course materials, such as textbooks and syllabus, among others). Some documents (e.g., student success coaching/tutoring stories, surveys) consisted of broader conversations/words that ensued between the student and student success coaches, counselor, and/or academic advisors within the programs' naturalistic settings.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) stated that the main reason to collect and analyze data is to include all facets of the phenomena and present a more holistic picture, using a descriptive model. Documents used in this study supplemented, complemented, and reinforced the interviews, to provide as "complete a picture of the setting or phenomena being studied as is possible" (Whitt, 2001, p. 448).

Procedures

The following section includes a description of the dissertation study's data collection, coding and data analysis processes used to summarize findings, and data management procedures.

Qualitative content analysis (interviews and document analysis) is directed toward finding and understanding meanings and insights and leads to an end product that is conveyed in words (Whitt, 2001). This section of the dissertation describes the data collection, data analysis and coding, and data management procedures.

Data Collection

Each of the 12 participants (6 from each institution) underwent a one-hour interview, with a few lasted slightly longer. To determine who would be interviewed (e.g., Retention Coordinator, Academic Advisors, Academic Services), which office (s) were to be studied, and/or where the Early Warning Program was housed, the first point of contact was the Freshman Academic Advising Office or Student Success Center at each institution.

After gaining permission, the Student Success Center Director at Institution Y provided an overview of the study via email (content written by researcher) to all administrators working with EWS and informed them that they may be selected and contacted for an interview (see Appendix A). Selected administrators were then contacted by the researcher, via telephone and email, and invited to participate and to schedule an interview. A similar protocol was followed at Institution X, except the Director of the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office sent the initial email (Appendix B).

Informed consent to participate was a function of replying to the email sent by the two Directors. All six contacted administrators at Institution Y agreed to participate, while five of the six contacts at Institution X agreed. Two alternates were then selected (one from the Registrar's Office and one from the Counseling and Psychological Services Office) for Institution X, both of whom declined. Finally, a third alternate (from the Retention Office) agreed to participate.

To gain a broad understanding of the phenomenon being studied, semi-structured/open-ended interviews and documents were used to collect data (see Table 2

below). Individuals define the world in unique ways; therefore, semi-structured

interviews where the questions and order are determined helped guide the multiple

interviews toward addressing the research questions; and the open-ended questions,

which allowed for probing and clarification of administrators' responses, exploring

unplanned topics that arise, etc. (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The semi-

structured/open-ended interviews included the 16 exploratory (analytic inductive)

questions and realities listed below. Additional probing of the interview questions

occurred to clarify responses and further identify initial themes that emerged.

Information regarding in-depth conversations/words within the EWS (e.g.,

conversations/words between the student and student success coaches, counselor,

academic advisors, retention specialists) was achieved through the subject's own frame of

reference via interviews with those who oversaw or assisted EWS.

The interview questions used were hypothetical, ideal, and interpretive in nature

(Merriam, 1998). The interview questions were not written to coerce or influence

responses, but were open-ended to allow participants to freely respond (Hand & Payne,

2008). The questions were designed to not be a set formula, but a guide that allowed the

flow of conversation, elaboration, departure, and clarification/follow-up to questions

(Hand & Payne, 2008). The exploratory (analytic inductive) questions and realities that

were observed through these interviews and documents are listed below:

- Describe the services that are offered frequently at this institution?

- Describe your philosophy of retention (the theories you espouse to/use), and
  how it is applied in the program?

- Describe your personal experience in the EWS?

106

- What are your students' greatest needs?

- What are students' greatest academic skill weaknesses?

- What is your explanation as to why your students are not being successful/do not succeed?

- What reasons are relayed for students not doing well academically?

- What are some of your shared explanations on campus for students' lack of success?

- When your colleagues complain about student failure, what do they usually say? Who do they blame?

- Describe the training you have received regarding EWS, in order to work with students with difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information?

- What do you believe students are experiencing (e.g., setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.) in the program?

- Describe the self-esteem of students who are involved in the program?

- When colleagues talk about students' ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, what do they typically say?

- Describe how and to what extent the program goes to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues/deficit?

- Describe how factors within the program effectively bring about changes in at-risk students' learning and development?

- Describe how the program can be improved or enhanced at your institution?

Documents were also acquired from individuals at the institutions (as well as each institution's website) to triangulate the data; further explore themes; supplement, compliment, and reinforce the interviews; and present a more holistic picture of the phenomena being observed.

Table 2

Steps Taken to Collect Data, and Date the Data were Collected

Steps	Date
1. Researcher contacted the Director (via telephone) at Institution X for permission to conduct the study and to identify potential administrators to interview. Researcher received verbal consent.	6/17/2011
2. Researcher contacted the Director (via telephone) at Institution Y for permission to conduct the study and to identify potential administrators to interview. Researcher received verbal consent on 6/20/2011 and written consent on 10/28/2011.	6/20/2011
3. IRB office at Institution X sent researcher email stating that an IRB is not needed; and permission is only needed from the director at Institution X.	11/3/2011
4. Researcher sent email to the Director at Institution X to confirm permission to conduct the study.	1/6/2012
5. Researcher received written consent (via email) from the Director at Institution X to conduct the study.	1/9/2012
6. Researcher received approval (via email) from the IRB office at Institution Y to conduct the data collection for this study.	1/11/2012
7. Researcher sent email to the Director at Institution Y to confirm permission to conduct the study. Director asked researcher to contact his/her coordinator, to schedule a brief phone appointment to get a brief overview of EWS administrators (title, department, and role in the EWS), before beginning the study.	1/12/2012
8. Director at Institution X sent an email to researcher, with names (and email addresses) of prospective administrators for the study.	1/15/2012 and 2/23/2012
9. Researcher received approval (via email) from doctoral institution's (Florida International University) IRB Office to begin dissertation data collection at Institutions X and Y.	2/2/2012
10. Brief phone conversation (regarding biography of EWS administrators and overview of EWS structure) with director from Institution Y.	2/14/2012
11. Director from Institution Y requested that researcher send (via email) a description of the study, that Director could email to all administrators working with the EWS.	2/17/2012
12. Researcher sent (via email) a description of the study, that director could email to all administrators working with the EWS.	2/18/2012
13. Director at Institution Y sent an email (with researcher's description of the study) to all administrators who work with EWS, informing them that they may be contacted to participate in the study.	2/24/2012

14. Researcher sent email to administrators at Institution X, inviting them to participate in the study. Several email communications occurred between the researcher and administrators to schedule interviews.	2/2012 to 4/2012
15. Researcher sent email to individual administrators at Institution Y, inviting them to participate in the study. Several email communications occurred between researcher and administrators to schedule interviews.	2/2012 to 3/2012
16. Conducted the study (interviews and data collection) at Institution X.	2/2012 to 4/2012
17. Conducted the study (interviews and data collection) at Institution Y.	2/2012 to 3/2012
18. Sent emails to administrators at Institution X and Institution Y, thanking them for participating in the study.	Sent directly after each interview. Content of email varied.
19. Sent verbatim transcripts to administrators, through private emails received from administrators.	From 2/2/103 to 2/10/2013

Data Analysis and Coding

The interviews and documents provided direct information about events, experiences, decisions, activities, and processes, surrounding EWS and administrators' perceptions or ways in which they make sense of students' experiences within these programs (Whitt, 2001). The processes of data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously to generate questions for the study, achieve greater understanding of the phenomenon being explored, fill gaps in knowledge and understanding, eliminate needless repetition, and minimize and condense large quantities of data (Whitt, 2001). Additionally, both interviews and document analysis were used to compare accounts and assess the data obtained (Merriam, 1998). Looking for contradictions and confirmation between the written statements and the interview statements was a form of triangulation of data (cross-examining or verifying of themes using multiple sources); and because analysis was done simultaneously, subsequent interviews explored emerging themes.

The interview and document data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to address the research questions, as well as the journals and reflective memos associated with each fieldnote analysis. Document analysis was also conducted using the same approach.

Each interview page was divided into two columns: 1/3 of the page was reflections, and 2/3 was the verbatim interview. Journals consisted of the following: a description of the interviews; when it was conducted and typed; and what the interviewer experienced while conducting each interview, expected before each interview, and felt after each interview. Reflective memos consisted of a self-evaluation - - the purpose of each interview and if it was achieved; what needed additional work before the next interviews; prior knowledge, readings, and/or theory to supplement findings and level of understanding; and analyzing and summarizing the interviews.

During the transcribing and coding of the interviews/transcripts, emerging themes between the various interviews were identified using Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) method of transcribing and coding phenomenological interviews. The coding categories to identify main themes in the verbatim transcripts and documents included the following: setting/context, situation, perspective, process (and any activity, events, or strategy codes related to the process), and relationship/social structure (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The interview themes were also combined with emerging themes acquired through the documents, using Merriam's (1998) and Whitt's (2001) method of document analysis. Three formal analysis (line-by-line coding, focused coding, and inductively linking emergent themes), identified in Parker and Boutelle (2009), were then used to identify subthemes. The data analysis coding categories are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Data Analysis Coding Categories

Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) coding categories	Focused Coding	Line by Line Coding
Setting/Context	Institutions doing to improve EWS retention	
		Non-EWS service
		EWS service
		Retention mission/goal
		EWS student population
		Administrator's view of service/university's retention efforts
		EWS factors bring changes (conclusion & recommendations)
		Improving/enhancing EWS (conclusion & recommendations)
Situation	How Administrator fits into EWS	
		Administrator's view on his/her role
		Administrator's view on retention
		Administrator's philosophy/theories
		Administrator's philosophy applied in EWS
		Administrator's training
		Administrator's experience in EWS
Perspectives	Students' retention issues/deficits	
		Self-esteem
		Greatest needs
		Academic skill weaknesses
		Ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information
		Reasons not doing well academically
		Explanation why not successful/do not succeed
		Explanation for lack of success
		Accountability
Perspectives	Students' EWS experiences	
		Settings
		Feelings

		Reaction, etc.
Perspectives	Students' learning/ development	
Process	EWS stages	
		Identify issues/deficits (also any activity, events, and/or strategies)
		Assess issues/deficits (also any activity, events, and/or strategies)
		Monitor issues/deficits (also any activity, events, and/or strategies)
		Address issues/deficits (also any activity, events, and/or strategies)
Relationship/social structure	Services/critical departments	
		Working together
		Not working together

"Line-by-line coding was used to mark meaningful units that addressed each research question [. . .] *and* focused coding was used to combine meaningful units into categories or emergent themes [italics added]" (Parker and Boutelle, 2009, p. 207). Finally, *"inductive coding was used to inductively link* emergent themes about each research question to the conceptual frame-work of [. . .] *Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms, and Perez's retention strategies,* to generate broad themes that addressed the study's purpose [italics added]" (Parker and Boutelle, 2009, p. 207). Frequent comparisons across interviews and document data sources were also conducted to analyze and triangulate the data; verify themes; attempt to achieve transparency, validity, and trustworthiness/credibility; provide rigor and quality of study; and address the research questions, as noted in the dissertation's methodology (Parker and Boutelle, 2009).

To provide a comprehensive view of retention in EWS, Hossler and Bean's four retention paradigms (learning, development, economic, and student purpose) were used in the study to determine how the specific actions (retention strategies and/or interventions) used by EWS to assist at-risk students and achieve overall retention, align and/or do not align with the four retention paradigms. The retention paradigms were also used to determine how the values/stated purposes and desired outcomes of EWS, and the institution, align with each other, and the theoretical frameworks. Additionally, Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms were used to address the research questions, summarize data acquired through the various data sources, and provide recommendations. Perez's (1998) retention strategies (sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming), which are critical in translating Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms (Borland, 2001) into actionable retention interventions, were also used to study interventions designed to assist academically at-risk students, and to also guide the dissertation. Perez (1998) hypothesizes that the following: sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming, should be used to design interventions that identify and help students (especially at-risk students) overcome barriers, persist, and achieve academic success. Retention strategies such as sorting (identifying students who need intervention), supporting (helping students identify barriers and address problems), connecting (encouraging interaction and academic and social integration), and transforming (changing students and the institution) are critical in translating Hossler and Bean's multiple retention lenses theory/paradigms, into actionable retention interventions (Perez, 1998).

Data Management

Data management approaches (risk to subjects and confidentiality of data) listed below, were used to manage and secure the data in this dissertation study.

Risk to Subjects. Immediate or long-range risks associated with procedures (interviews and document analysis) used in the study, were eliminated because pseudonyms were used in place of personally-identifying information in the study to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

Confidentiality of Data. The interviews were audio recorded, and the data collected had identifiable information (e.g., names of institutions, names of subjects who underwent the interviews, documents obtained from subjects and the institutions). However, pseudonyms were used in place of personally-identifying information in the study and the final analyzed results, to protect anonymity and confidentiality. Similarly, data attained through documents were natural to the setting and relevant to the study. They may or may not include identifiers. Any documents obtained which were relevant to the study (printed or otherwise) that had identifiers, were coded using pseudonyms during data analysis to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Additionally, identifiable data was secured in a locked file cabinet in the principle investigator's home, in a closet, where no one except the principle investigator, had access to the data. Identifiable data was also secured on a home computer and laptop that is password protected.

Integrity Measures

The following section includes a description of the integrity measures that were used for this dissertation study.

To provide rigor and quality of study in this qualitative study, documents were reviewed for authenticity, nature, accuracy, and credibility, to demonstrate that the documents were not created for or altered for the study. For example, where they originated from, why they were written, who wrote them, and the context in which they were written, were reviewed (Merriam, 1998). Authenticity was also achieved through the subject's own frame of reference via interviews with those who oversee or assist EWS.

Additionally, the method of triangulation (acquiring data from multiple sources and analyzing diverse perspectives) was used. Carlston (2010) states that "qualitative inquirers mindfully employ a variety of techniques to increase the trustworthiness of the research they conduct; that is . . . the researcher did everything possible to ensure that data was appropriately and ethically collected, analyzed, and reported" (p. 1103). Establishing trustworthiness/credibility is especially important when the researcher is the research instrument, and the research involves interpretive analysis rather than analysis conducted through scientifically validated quantitative instruments (Carlston, 2010).

To enhance the study's trustworthiness/credibility, researcher's autobiography was provided with assumptions. In addition, to enhance the study's trustworthiness/credibility, data consisted of document analysis and individual interviews from multiple campuses to gain diverse administrative perspectives. The data points were triangulated to validate the phenomenon observed through the interviews and

document analysis (e.g., member checked; transcribed and given back to the interviewees for additions, and to confirm the content of the transcripts). The data points were also triangulated to verify themes by looking for contradictions and confirmation between the written statements (e.g., documents) and the interview statements, provide rigor and quality of study, and to enhance trustworthiness/credibility. Additionally, audit trail (careful documentations of all facets of the study) was also maintained to enhance the study's trustworthiness/credibility (Carlston, 2010). The following were used to establish an audit trail: reflexivity (journals of thoughts and feelings reflecting what occurred during the research process to show transparency), thick and rich description (detailed descriptions of settings, participants, data collection, etc.), triangulation (use of documents and interviews from multiple institutions), and member checking (participants verify the accuracy of their transcriptions; Carlson, 2010; Merriam, 1998).

Further, peer reviewers were used to enhance the study's credibility and monitor researcher subjectivity. Audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then given back to the interviewees for additions, to check reliability, etc., (see Appendix C). Two of the 12 administrators who were interviewed (one from each institution), did not respond to the email listed in Appendix C requesting that they provide a private email address where their verbatim interview transcripts could be sent. The remaining 10 administrators (5 from each institution) responded to the email listed in Appendix C and were provided with their verbatim interview transcripts. The interview transcripts were not returned to the interviewer with additions, corrections, or comments. Journals and reflective memos associated with each fieldnote analysis were also used for this study to enhance the study's credibility and monitor research subjectivity. The process of keeping

journals and reflective memos, are discussed in more detail in the data analysis section of the methodology.

Summary

The qualitative research methods used to conduct this dissertation study of EWS at two 4-year Florida institutions were identified in this chapter of the dissertation. The themes that emerged using this qualitative research methodology design are discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the data analysis conducted, numerous themes (and subthemes) that address

the five research questions emerged for Institutions X and Y. The themes and subthemes

are discussed in this chapter. Pseudonyms were used in place of identifiable information.

Institution X

What Institutions are doing to Improve Retention in EWS

The first research question explored what the institutions were doing to improve

retention in Early Warning Systems (EWS). To address this research question,

administrators at Institution X were asked to describe the services that were offered

frequently at their institution, their philosophy of retention (the theories they

espoused/used) and how it was applied in the program, the training they had received

regarding EWS and working with at-risk students who had difficulty analyzing,

synthesizing, and evaluating information, and their personal experiences in the EWS.

Services Offered Frequently at the Institution

Document:

A copy of the institutions' retention memorandum (2005) was acquired for this

research. The retention memorandum was sent from top administration (the university

president and his cabinet) to the interim dean of undergraduate studies to inquire about

the following: what the institution was doing to promote retention and graduation, how

the success of the efforts to promote retention and graduation was being measured, and

what was being done to attract good students and minorities. Two additional questions

were also raised by the interim dean: how the "existing retention efforts be improved," and what else could be done by the institution to increase retention rates (Retention Memorandum, 2005, p. 1). The retention memorandum raises relevant questions about the importance of retention and institutional stability; particularly, those that pertain to the economic, learning, and development paradigms expressed by Hossler and Bean (1990). Borland (2001-2002) stated in terms of Hossler and Bean's paradigms that without focus on the retention as economic paradigm to maintain enrollment, "the reaching of the 'moral' Learning and Development purposes would, for many institutions, be impossible" (p. 374).

As the retention memorandum noted, this retention "issue is extremely broad, with major implications for the mission of the university" (2005, p. 1). The retention memorandum further stated that ongoing retention initiatives (and assessment measures/efforts) were "devoted to promoting student retention" and include numerous offices/programs/initiatives: the Retention Office, Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, Bridges program, Learning Strategies and Human Development (SLS) course, Early Academic Warning, Writing Center, and Multicultural Affairs program (Academic Support offices/programs/initiatives), and the Counseling Center, Office of Disability, and Student Health Services, among others.

The retention memorandum also stated that in terms of assessment for the Early Academic Warnings program, "a study is done at the end of each semester to determine how many of the students notified actually end up on freshman warning or academic program" (2005, p. 3). Specifically, the average number of "warned students *who* avail

119

themselves of the intervention measures outlined and salvage the semester with a passing performance [italics added]" (2005, p. 3)

Additionally, the retention memorandum "[. . .] discuss[es] a holistic approach to retention which involves a multitude of organizational components working cohesively toward this common goal" (2005, p. 1). This common goal includes improving existing retention measures (or ongoing retention efforts) through: "enhance follow-up procedures and effect increases in the number of initiatives which have been shown to have positive results" (2005, p. 6). For example, follow-up procedures included hiring a "full-time coordinator whose sole responsibility would be to establish follow-up contact and advisement with students notified that they are headed for academic warning or probation" and "interview students who have decided to withdraw from all classes" (Retention Memorandum, 2005, p. 7). It was noted in the interviews that faculty involvement in the EWS did not extend beyond referring students (e.g., submitting midterm grades through the midterm grade reporting system).

The comprehensive approach to student success section of the retention memorandum stated:

> A tremendous amount of imagination, cooperation and hard work have already gone into implementing measures that are intended to achieve student success at Institution X, particularly first year success. There is also no question that some additional measures will improve upon that effort. So why do our retention/graduation rates languish at unacceptable levels? Most objective observations indicate that the institution-wide unity of purpose and sense of commitment which seem essential to success is lacking at [. . .] [Institution X]. (2005, p. 10)

Noting how problematic the retention/graduation issue was:

> A university-wide commitment, focused on all aspects of the lower division experience in general and our approach to the needs of the first-year student in

particular, must be undertaken. Academics, academic support and student life issues must all be readdressed in a comprehensive manner. (Retention memorandum, 2005, p. 10)

The institution's websites and documents (e.g., brochures and flyers) also identified services that were offered frequently at the institution, which coincided with many services that were identified during the interviews as services offered frequently at the institution. The websites and documents also stated that the following services: Freshman Academic Advising Services, Student Retention, Writing Center, and Counseling Center, among others, are located "under one roof." While conducting the interviews, it was noted that some services (e.g., the Retention Office and Freshman Academic Advising Services Office) were housed in separate buildings on campus. This is noteworthy when exploring the research question regarding university services working together to share students' information to benefit students.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

When administrators were asked to describe the services offered frequently at their institution, the major theme that arose was that many services were offered frequently at the institution. Administrators stated: "we offer all kinds of services," "there are [not] any services that we don't offer that a traditional university would have", "the university does a really good job of packaging services and resources for first time students," and "we offer a lot. I mean, we're a comprehensive institution." One administrator classified the services offered frequently at the institution into three avenues: academic avenues; emotional, mental, and physical health avenues; and other services/avenues.

OK. Well the university does offer, I mentioned the [Retention] Office with the tutoring and the SI sessions. There's also the Math Lab, which has . . . Which is a resource a lot of the students are required to go to in their math classes. But they also offer tutoring there. There is . . . the [. . .] university Writing Center which I mentioned. But then there's also . . . those are sort of the academic avenues. But then there are also the emotional, mental, and physical health avenues too. So there's the university Clinic, which sometimes students seem to be referred to if their lifestyle indicates that they are taking some risks. [. . .]

Administrators stated that services conducted through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office included academic advising, academic counseling, SLS courses (freshman experience learning strategies developmental course, and career development learning strategies course), scheduling, and major related information. Administrators also stated that services conducted through the Retention Office included Learning Communities (20-24 incoming freshman taking classes together based on interest or major), tutoring, supplemental instruction (SI), and the Math Lab.

Though not identified collectively during the interviews, the following were mentioned by several administrators as services offered frequently at the institution: one-on-one retention counseling and testing support through the Retention Office, orientation, campus recreation, health and wellness, the offices that promote faculty development in order to provide student opportunities and improve teaching, multicultural affairs, and disability services.

Summary.

EWS was infrequently identified as a service in the interviews. Only one of six administrators identified EWS as a frequently offered service without prompting. The other five administrators said EWS was frequent, only after prompting. When prompted

122

with a probing question regarding EWS as a service offered frequently at the institution, one of the remaining five administrators responded:

> [. . .] Our primary focus is first to second year. And as part of that, what we did is we began looking at things that we can do as an institution, or as an office, to help to ensure the students had every opportunity to be successful here at the university. And, so, a few years back we started an early academic alert system [. . .]

Early Warning Systems

Two major themes emerged when using probing questions regarding EWS services for first-year students. They were: tools/programs/retention efforts offered prior to enrollment and tools/programs/efforts at the first sign of academic struggle. To quote an administrator, "the president had asked every division be involved in retention. So you may find . . . Because we have 30,000 plus students, you may find multiple divisions that may have . . . tools." For example, the Multicultural Affairs program, Incoming Survey Self-Assessment Inventory, Summer Bridge program, and First Generation program emerged as examples of EWS for first year students prior to enrollment during some of the interviews.

Tools/Programs /Retention Efforts

Prior to Enrollment. Some of the tools/programs/retention efforts prior to enrollment took into consideration students' standardized test scores and/or GPA and prior background (e.g., first generation status, not having the support at home, and not knowing the higher education process) that could place them at risk. Some of these retention efforts not only assisted students prior to enrollment, they also continued to assist these students throughout their first year if they became at-risk through non-

success. For example, the students in the Summer Bridge program were channeled into a

Fall Bridge program designed specifically for them. These retention efforts were

centered within individual offices (e.g., Multicultural Affairs Office, Retention Office,

Freshman Academic Advising Services Office) and were described by some

administrators as early warning tools/programs/retention efforts at the institution to assist

first-year students.

At the First Indication of Academic Struggle. In terms of EWS

tools/programs/retention efforts used to assist students at the first indication of academic

struggle, the major themes that arose during the interviews were: the midterm grade

reporting systems, early alert (faculty referral), and freshman warning systems. An

administrator indicated the EWS was based on students showing behavior of non-success,

at which time the services/departments would react to assist students. This statement is

also echoed by many administrators, and is presented below:

> [. . .] In this office at risk means . . . that they have shown behavior . . . of non-
> success. I mean, our early warning is based on non-success. Then we react to
> that. The thing is . . . The key is . . . that it happens . . . prior to . . . the last day to
> withdraw [. . .]

Second-Year Retention Program. In discussing the tools/programs/retention

efforts at the institution to improve first-year student retention, a second-year retention

program (known as the Second-Year Retention program), which assists sophomore

students and higher who are suspended or placed on probation, was identified. This

program was in place to improve second year students' retention. Participation in the

Second-Year Retention program was mandatory and intrusive. Further, the program was

nationally funded and students who were on suspension and probation could "opt" to

participate rather than be dismissed. In addition to mandatory participation, there were

also mandatory components to the Second-Year Retention program: weekly meetings

with an advisor and participation in support services (e.g., Writing Center).

Several administrators stated that the second-year students and the university in

general received more support than first-year students and the first-year EWS program.

Administrators stated that a program similar to the Second-Year Retention program did

not exist for first-year students at the institution. As per an administrator, which is a

sentiment echoed by other administrators:

> [. . .] I do know that if a student is going to be suspended, so let's say they're at
> that point where they can't get their GPA up and they are on suspension at this
> point, they can opt to do the [. . .] [Second-Year Retention] program in lieu of
> their suspension. So they'll maintain attendance at [. . .] [the university] for that
> semester that they should be suspended, and then they'll do this intensive advising
> with the [. . .] [Second-Year Retention] advisors. So, there's, there's a bit more
> support for the sophomores and for the university in general. But in terms of
> Freshman Academic Advising [Services] [. . .] [there is only one person].

Administrators' Interview Responses: Tools/Programs/Retention Efforts at

First Sign of Academic Struggle.

As stated above, after additional probing questions, the major themes that

emerged as EWS to improve retention were: mid-term grade progress reporting, early

alert (faculty referral), and freshman warning systems, which will be discussed below.

These tools/programs/retention efforts were offered at the first sign of academic struggle.

Midterm Grade Reporting System.

Midterm grades were reported by faculty through the online Banner computer

software system. A field is designated in the Banner computer software system for

faculty members to enter "midterm grades [C- or below], in the same manner they would

125

enter final grades." Administrators stated that after grades were entered by faculty,

"students can go into [the university's online student information and registration system]

to see their midterm grades [that have been] posted." Administrators also stated that

students who received an early alert and/or midterm grade report below a "C" were

strongly encouraged to contact the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office to

discuss their progress and how to remedy the situation.

Freshman Warning System.

In terms of the freshman warning system portion of the EWS, administrators

stated that students who went on freshman warning (have a GPA below a 2.0 at the end

of their first semester) were identified and alerted. Students who received freshman

warning alerts had a registration hold placed on their records, preventing them from

registering and academic activities until they have completed and successfully passed an

online Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory.

Early Alert (Faculty Referral) System.

Administrators also stated that there was an early alert (the faculty referral)

system portion to the EWS where faculty (or advisor) could refer any student for whom

they had a concern. As per an administrator:

> [. . .] The faculty referral system, which had sort of fallen to the wayside to a
> certain extent. The faculty referral system is when, let's say . . . is when "an
> instructor has a student he notice is not doing very well, is being disrespectful, or
> they just notice something is off." They can [send] . . . referral via email to . . .
> me basically. And I would follow up with the student to say you know, "your
> instructor contacted me with some concerns. Would you like to come in and meet
> with me so we can talk about this?" [. . .]

Summary.

The following were themes mentioned as EWS services offered frequently at the institution for first year students: midterm grade reporting, freshman warning, and early alert (faculty referral) systems. Administrators collectively stated that these EWS services assisted students at the first sign of academic difficulty. During the interviews, administrators collectively stated that the EWS (midterm grade reporting system and freshman warning system) was originally a paper process when it was first implemented, and staff members in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office had to manually input information received from the faculty into an Access spreadsheet. The paper process was replaced with the online program (the Banner computer software system) approximately one year ago.

Challenges with the previous EWS system (the paper process) were noted. Administrators stated that the paper process was very labor intensive. It required manually inputting each midterm grade warning received from faculty into an Access database. In terms of the current EWS system (the Banner computer software system) to report the midterm grade deficiencies, problems were reported as well. For example, an administrator from the Retention Office stated:

> If the early warning system is . . . is just the faculty members . . . putting the grades up, if that's what we're calling the program, then I think that it's just telling us . . . a . . . a . . . one piece of data. I think there is a place on that where they say, is it based on attendance, papers, exam grades [. . .].

Moreover, in a majority of the interviews, participants indicated that with elimination of the previous EWS (the paper process), certain capabilities were also eliminated. For example, the ability for faculty to report anything that did not pertain to

midterm grades, such as feedback regarding students who are struggling, was lost. As one administrator noted:

> No, the computerized system does not [allow for entering anything other than midterm grades, such as any comments that a professor might have, or any behavioral type issues that may arise]. The paper and pencil did. But again, that was extremely time-consuming.

To further address the first research question regarding what institutions are doing to improve retention in EWS, the next section of the dissertation will explore themes associated with administrators' philosophy of retention (the theories they espoused/used) and how it was applied in the program, the training they received regarding EWS and working with at-risk students that had difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, and their personal experiences in the EWS.

Administrators' Knowledge of (and view of) Programming

With a substantial amount of literature on student development and success and what should be done, it was important to examine if retention administrators knew the extant research, and if it guided their programming. For example, what did administrators actually know about the research and what they were implementing? Were they actually doing what they claimed? And what were the reasons they gave for not implementing interventions that research deems necessary? To address these questions, the next section of the dissertation focused on administrators' knowledge (and view of) programming: the philosophy/theories espoused to/used, how the philosophy/theories they espoused to/used was applied in the program, EWS training, and their personal experience in the EWS.

Administrators' Philosophy/Theories.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Administrators' Philosophy/Theories

Espoused /Used.

Administrators who responded to the question collectively stated the following

themes: fostering a sense of belonging, connection, and success, having quality

services/measures in place that help students become successful, and ensuring students

are engaged both academically and socially. These themes are summarized in an

administrator's response below:

> Well. Well, I believe it takes a village. So I do believe that the whole experience
> is about student success and student persistence. And that the university has to
> put measures in place . . . of indicators, that freshman year, to help students be
> successful. [. . .].

While most administrators did not cite a particular theorist, their statements did

align with Tinto's academic and social engagement theory. Borland (2001-2002)

summarized Hossler and Bean's (1990) learning and development paradigms by stating

that "the student persistence research of Tinto (1998) and others has closely linked

students' in-and out-of-class activities with enhanced learning" (p. 374).

Administrators from the Retention Office cited Tinto's student development,

departure and/or retention theories during their interviews as philosophy/theories they

espoused/used in the Retention Office. These administrators stated that much of what was

done in the Retention Office was based on those theories as summarized in an

administrator's quotation below:

> [. . .] A lot of what we do, we base on Vincent Tinto's student development
> theories and student departure theories. [. . .] We lose students who aren't
> performing well. We lose students who are performing extremely well. [. . .]
> So . . . we look at trying to provide comprehensive support, because we know that

there's not one silver bullet that's going to retain all students. [. . .] We do believe in student engagement and that the more the student is engaged both academically and socially, the better that they're going to . . . The better our chances of keeping them here. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: How Administrators'

Philosophy/Theories Applied In Program.

In terms of the learning and development paradigms, administrators stated the

following when asked to describe how the philosophy/theories they espoused/used were

applied in the program:

> Well, I think they bring some . . . other challenges to the, the table for whatever reason they are at-risk, that adds to . . . the . . . difficulty of the transition, or the challenge of the transition. So I think even more so, we need to understand the situation, what they bring with them, and their goals for what they are trying to achieve; and assist them as they bridge the gap. [. . .] We meet them where they are and help them proceed to where they need to be, to be successful.
>
> [. . .] Just trying to give the student the opportunity. Maybe hold their hand a little to get them to the right place and then let them go to let them discover how to . . . be on the track with their own lives.
>
> [. . .] I do believe that a retention tool is students' experiences outside of the classroom. So you gotta connect them to an organization; or connect them to faculty. If students are not connected to a student organization or primarily to a faculty member that they can connect to, then . . . they typically will not be retained or persist at the university.

Document. Another way administrators applied the philosophy/theories they

espoused /used was to make parents (in addition to students) aware of resources.

Documentation found on the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office's website

stated that in addition to students, parents were to be provided with general information

about college life and campus resources to understand their child's behavior, anticipate

situations/problems, know what questions to ask, communicate effectively and be

supportive, among others.

In addition, students who participated in strategies such as the SI program learned college level study skills and how to understand and master course content more effectively. They also earned higher grades than non-participants, collaborated with classmates and shared knowledge, compared class notes, discussed concepts, developed/integrated study and test taking strategies, and course content.

Summary.

Themes that emerged regarding how the philosophy/theories administrators espoused /used was applied to achieve the learning and development paradigms, included: fostering intrinsic motivation, providing opportunities and comprehensive support, helping students become successful by meeting them where they are, understanding (and respecting) the students, their individual needs (e.g., situation, goals), their challenges, and what they bring to the learning environment, and making students (and parents) aware of the resources. Much of what was said would usually align with a student deficit lens that these students are not fully ready and need to be fixed or brought up to speed. Specific strategies identified by administrators included: working out a study plan with students, conducting incoming surveys (e.g., Incoming Survey Self-Assessment Inventory), looking at high risk courses, and helping students get involved academically through student groups, SI, group tutoring, and student affairs organizations.

Administrators' EWS Training.

In terms of training to work with EWS and assist students in the EWS program with difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, the major theme that emerged was administrators were not provided with formal EWS training and were "self-

taught". To quote an administrator, "it's been me, my books, and my background."

Administrators' responses are summarized in the quotations below:

> Yeah, I mean . . . the early warning system is from . . . through another department. They haven't provided any kind of training for us for that.

> No, I don't know [of any training that goes on at the university for early warning students].

> [. . .] I never received actual training. I mean, my whole job is still . . . I've been here [. . . .] [many] years, but still everyday you learn something new and how to do something different. And when you get older you realize what works and what doesn't work. But no formal information training. But I think that has to do with the fact that I've been here so long and know [. . .]

Some administrators stated that they attended webinars, seminars, and/or professional conferences on a national level (e.g., NACADA and FYE); however, they were not specifically on EWS. An administrator also stated that the training module advisors received when hired was not specific to how to work with the EWS program and EWS student population.

Document.

Documents (tutor, SI leadership training, and SI session plan documents) and the Retention Office website (SI training homepage) were reviewed to explore tutors and SI leaders' training. The Retention Office's homepage stated that SI leaders are "trained in the most effective college level learning and study strategies." The interviews and documents revealed however that the formal training received by tutors and SI leaders was not conducted by those who oversaw EWS. In addition, this training was more generic, and was not specific to EWS students and their issues or deficits, and did not include training to assist EWS students with analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information.

Summary.

Administrators collectively stated during the interviews that those working with EWS were not provided with formal training deemed necessary for facilitating student learning and development. Instead, the administrators received training that was more generic. For example, the advisor training module received when first hired did not focus on EWS programs and students. Likewise, the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office and the Retention Office did not conduct EWS training; administrators' training was more a function of self-education. Additionally, training the tutors and SI leaders received through the Retention Office was not centered on working with EWS programs and students.

Administrators' Personal Experience in the EWS

Administrators' Interview Responses: Administrators' Experiences Varied.

The major theme that emerged was administrators' personal experiences in the EWS program varied widely. Two subthemes also emerged (direct involvement, and indirect involvement). In terms of direct involvement, an administrator reported having direct experience with/in the EWS program (e.g., working directly with EWS students when they go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office). In terms of indirect involvement, a majority of the administrators reported that they did not have direct involvement with/in the program, but may have been involved through submitting mid-term grades and/or early alerts or unknowingly assisting EWS students when they attended services as part of the general population. Some administrators (e.g., administrators who oversee the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office) did not provide information about personal/direct experience in the EWS, but instead provided a

general overview of EWS, and what they believed were the benefits/impact of the EWS

at their institution.

Indirect Involvement. In terms of the indirect involvement subtheme, an

administrator from the Retention Office responded that "I don't have any personal

experience with it. I'm not involved with it. Only . . . like I said, Freshman [Academic]

Advising [Services Office] providing that [list of students]." In general, administrators

were not aware which students were EWS students when they went to the Retention

Office (and other services) for assistance. As one administrator noted:

> [. . .] I know that when students are on probation, I may not know if they are on early warning; unless, they come and talk to me. And even the students who are on early warning, if they get a notification that they are not doing well, some of them may not seek out assistance and they're just like, "Oh. I'll do it myself!" [. . .]

In terms of the indirect involvement subtheme, an administrator from the

Student/Multicultural Affairs Office also responded:

> The, the early warning system here works well. [. . .] My experience has been really good. There's a collaboration between academic and student affairs in that. The only problem I find is . . . the amount of students that are coming out of high school . . . that are struggling. And the people power to respond to that. We just don't . . . We just don't have it. [. . .]

Direct Involvement (High-Level of Involvement). In terms of the direct

involvement subtheme, the administrator who reported a high level of contact with the

EWS students indicated in addition to similar responses mentioned in the indirect

involvement subtheme (e.g., enjoy working with EWS students who seek out services),

that he/she experienced some frustration, disheartenment, and struggles, because of

enhanced effort reaching out to EWS students and offering to help them and they do not

go into the office for help. The administrator further stated during his/her interview that

134

"because it [students' participation in EWS] is completely voluntary," and "there's no repercussion, there's no . . . There's no side effects [if students do not take advantage of the program]. It's an offer and that's about it." This sentiment, of the EWS program being voluntary and there is no repercussion if students do not attend, is also echoed by other administrators interviewed. This administrator's direct experience in the EWS is summarized below:

> [. . .] Honestly it's been very tough. It's been rewarding, but very tough. [. . .] I struggle a lot with . . . helping students, because it's completely voluntary. [. . .] I was kinda frustrated with the fact that I email, and I contact, and I approach so many students, and so few take advantage of it [. . .]. It's almost disheartening to a certain extent. Because you see that these students have so much potential. And it's that . . . the, the thought process aren't there where it's real to them, you know. Where college . . . Where it's worth it to, to put in the effort first of all. But also where the consequences are very real. I think that it's an issue of critical thinking development. You know, they're just aren't there yet. Some of them . . . which is, which is fine. But for me, it is very frustrating when you're working with a student and you're, you're trying to let them control where things are going. You know, you're obviously trying to guide a little bit to provide information and help wherever possible. But you know they're really streamlining where this is going. And so, you're relying on them to be upfront with you . . . about how things are going. And then, you know . . . they're not. And you find out that they are failing, and they haven't turned in their assignments when they told you that they did and not. And . . . it becomes difficult to feel like . . . I'm really making a positive impact. [. . .] So the sense of impact can be really discouraging. So then what I have to do . . . to really do to cope with that is first, I have to see what I can do better. What approaches can I take? What things can I alter? And, I am sort of looking at ways to . . . be more effective, both personally; as well as on a larger scale. [. . .]

Summary.

Administrators' experiences with the EWS varied. Some administrators stated that they have indirect involvement with the EWS; while others stated that they have direct (high-level) involvement in the EWS. Though administrators' personal experiences in the EWS varied, the administrator who had the direct (high-level) of

135

contact with EWS experienced frustration, disheartenment, and struggles within the

EWS. Further, administrators who had some contact with EWS (including the

administrator with the highest level of contact) collectively stated that few EWS students

took advantage of the program and sought assistance. They also lamented the lack of

repercussion if students did not go into the office when alerted. Finally, of the students

who did seek assistance, administrators enjoyed working with them.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 1.

Largely, there was evidence that the institution offered a wide range of EWS

services frequently and that EWS retention efforts were aimed at not only dealing with

first-year students at the first sign of academic struggle, but also prior to enrollment.

Mid-term grade reporting, freshman warning, and early faculty referral systems were

highlighted. EWS was highlighted only after prompting, which indicated a low priority

of EWS at the institution. A second-year retention program was noted as well; which

administrators stated received more institutional support than the first-year retention

program. Evidence emerged suggesting that theories (e.g., Tinto) and research did guide

efforts to achieve learning and development paradigms, although much was aligned

closely with a student deficit lens. Administrators also decried the lack of specific EWS-

related training needed to foster student learning and development optimally. Finally,

administrator experiences with the EWS varied, but in general there was a sense of

frustration with the system because there were no repercussions for non-participation,

despite being alerted, and too few students took advantage of the program. In addition,

frustration with the system because faculty participation in the program was low.

Assessment Measures to Identify, Assess, Track, Monitor, and Address

Students' Issues or Deficits; and Services/Critical Departments

Such as Working Together

The second research question explored (a) how assessment measures are used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues or deficits in EWS and (b) whether or not university services and critical departments such as EWS are working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students. The first part of this research question, which will be addressed below, explores how assessment measures are used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues or deficits in EWS.

Assessment Measures to Identify Students' Issues or Deficits

The following EWS were identified as main themes during the interviews as assessment measures to identify students' issues or deficits: midterm grade reporting system, freshman warning, and early (faculty referral) alert systems.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Midterm Grade Reporting System.

In terms of the theme regarding the midterm grade reporting system as an assessment measure to identify students' issues or deficits, administrators stated that faculty are invited to report midterm grades for students so that students who have a "C-" or below in a course can be identified, which is summarized in the quotation below:

> [. . .] What the midterm grade report does is, we've asked faculty to indicate in the midterm grade, they can put . . . Even if the student is getting "A's" and "B's", they can put that. But what we are most interested in, was students who are

earning a "C" or below in the course. And that was an indication to us that students were . . . just barely keeping their heads above water. And in some cases they had a "C-," they weren't keeping their heads above water. And they really needed to do something to turn themselves around if they planned on being successful at the end of the semester. And so, that was our intent. Our intent was to notify students early enough in the semester that they were in potential harm's way in terms of being successful at the end of the semester. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Early Alert (Faculty Referral) System.

In terms of the theme regarding the early alert (faculty referral) system, administrators stated that it invites faculty to identify and report students in their class (s) who they notice are having problems. Faculty can report this information to the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office through the early alert (faculty referral) system (which is submitted through email).

Administrators' Interview Responses: Freshman Warning System.

In terms of the theme regarding the freshman warning system as an assessment measure to identify students' issues or deficits, administrators stated students are identified who go on freshman warning (whose GPA falls below a 2.00). A hold is then placed on their academic records by the Registrar's Office "prohibiting them from any sort of registration transaction. Any kind of [. . .] academic transaction, until that hold has been reconciled." Students are then sent an email notification informing them of their status.

Summary.

The midterm grade reporting, early alert (faculty referral), and the freshman warning systems were mentioned as assessment measures to identify students' issues or deficits, during the interviews. Administrators stated that the midterm grade reporting

system invites faculty to report students with grades of "C-" or below in a course; the early alert (faculty referral) system invites faculty to report (through email) students in their class(s) who they notice are having problems; and the freshman warning system identifies students who go on freshman warning (GPA falls below a 2.0), and subsequently an academic hold is placed on these students by the Registrar's Office.

Assessment Measures to Assess Students' Issues/Deficits

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Administrators stated that students' issues or deficits were assessed informally at best. Indeed, as one administrator stated, "There's no real assessment . . . to track or to evaluate the students." This was echoed by many administrators.

Summary.

The major theme that emerged during the interviews regarding assessing students' issues and deficits was that formal assessment was not conducted in the EWS program. Nationally normed assessment measures were not used and the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory that was utilized was a home-grown inventory.

Assessment Measures to Address Students' Issues/Deficits

Administrators' Interview Responses: Midterm Grade Reporting System.

In terms of the first theme to address students' issues or deficits, administrators stated that students are informed through email (as well as told in their SLS course) that midterm grades will be posted, about any midterm deficiencies they may have, and are

given information about support services. However, faculty participation in the midterm

grade reporting process is low, as one administrator stated that he/she also tells students

that "not all faculty participate." Once students are identified through the midterm grade

reporting system, students who have a deficiency are told to speak with their professors

regarding how they are doing in the courses. A letter from the Freshman Academic

Advising Services Office also invites them to contact (and go into) the office for

assistance.

In addition to the main theme just described, the following subtheme also

emerged. The names of students with three or more deficiencies/mid-term grades below

a "C-" (or two or more mid-term grades below a "C", depending on the administrator

interviewed) are provided to the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman

Academic Advising Services Office. The retention specialist/academic coach then sends

each respective student a personal email inviting them to visit him/her in the office to

discuss remedying the situation. Administrators' descriptions of the midterm grade

reporting system are summarized in the quotations below:

> [. . .] We've had students who have gotten 2 or 3 midterm grades. And so, that's
> usually an indication to us that the students need some extra help, you know, or
> some extra assistance. And so, they are referred to, and work directly with, our
> academic coach or . . .

> So, when midterm grades come out as they have this week, I send an email to
> every student that is doing poorly (you know, "C-" or below in 3 or more classes)
> and offer my services. [. . .] But if they are willing to work with me, I meet with
> them as often as they want (once a week, twice a week, however much is
> necessary) to help them keep on track, plan ahead, and learn the skills that they
> need.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Freshman Warning System.

To address students' issues or deficits once students are identified through the freshman warning system, the main theme that emerged is students must successfully complete (pass with an 85% or higher) an Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory located on the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office website to have the freshman warning hold removed. In terms of Perez's (1998) connecting and supporting strategies, the following subtheme emerged: if students do not successfully complete the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory after two attempts, they are required to go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office to speak with the retention specialist/academic coach. Still, students are not required to attend workshops (or any intervention) to focus on the deficits identified in the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory. Additionally, the online Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory data is not shared with the retention specialist/academic coach, and the retention specialist/academic coach does not use that data when meeting with students.

Document.

Documents (early academic alert letter to students, mid-term grade report memorandum to faculty, and mid-term grade report letter and email to students), which are sent through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, were acquired for examination and analysis. In relation to midterm grades below a "C-", students were told in the documents that "it is urgent that you take action to improve your academic standing. Don't jeopardize your academic future by ignoring the present situation." Phrases such as, "if you would like to discuss your grades and academic options with an academic advisor" you should go to the website to schedule an appointment with an

advisor; and "now is the time to take action to ensure your [. . .] success in the current and future semesters," were used several times throughout the midterm grade report and early academic alert letters.

Students were "invited [through the mid-term email letter to students] to contact, meet, and work with" the retention specialist in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office through the email letter, who was described in the letter as "specifically oriented towards helping students who are [. . .] experiencing academic difficulty to get back on track." The email letter also states that the retention specialist/academic coach specializes in time management, goal setting, and study habits, among others. Students are also given suggestions at the bottom of the early academic warning letter, similar to those mentioned above, regarding how to improve their situation (e.g., get involved in study groups or find a study partner who can serve as a source of motivation and assistance).

Summary.

As noted in the interviews and documents listed above, in terms of assessment measures to address students' issues or deficits, the following themes emerged: midterm grade reporting system and freshman warning system. In terms of the midterm grade reporting system, administrators stated that students with midterm grade deficiency are informed through email, given information about support services that are offered, and told to speak with their professors regarding how they are doing in the course(s). The Freshman Academic Advising Services Office also sends letters to students with deficiencies, inviting them to contact (and go into) the office for assistance. Additionally, the name of students with three or more midterm grade deficiencies below a "C-" are

forwarded to the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, who sends those students a personal email inviting them to visit him/her in the office to discuss remedying the situation.

In terms of the freshman warning system, administrators stated that students identified through this system must successfully complete (pass with an 85% or higher) an Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory located on the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office website to have the freshman warning hold removed. Students, who do not successfully pass the inventory after two attempts, are required to go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office to speak with the retention specialist/academic coach. Students were not required to attend workshops (or any intervention) focusing on the deficits identified in the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory nor was the online Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory data shared with the retention specialist/academic coach. Lastly, the retention specialist/academic coach did not use this data when meeting with students.

Assessment Measures to Track and Monitor Students' Issues/Deficits

Administrators' Interview Responses.

The major theme that emerged regarding tracking and monitoring of EWS students' issues/deficits were: EWS students' issues/deficits and the services students were referred to (and/or attended) were not tracked and monitored.

When administrators were asked if they (or their departments) had tracked certain information regarding the EWS (e.g., how students are doing, the services they attend, and/or whether or not they become successful through the services provided) and

143

reported it to faculty or other departments/services, there was a consensus that tracking

was not conducted for the EWS program. Administrators collectively responded: "no,

no we don't", and "no, not at this point."

The themes regarding tracking and monitoring of students' issues or deficits, and

tracking and monitoring of services students were referred to (and/or attended) were

summarized in the following excerpts:

> [. . .] I'm not sure if we . . . have a system in place that continually monitors
> [long pause]. [. . .] There is nothing . . . that says "we haven't heard from you; or
> how are you doing?" Monitoring that! We don't have that. That doesn't exist.
> Not that I know of. I might be wrong.

> [. . .] I provide and keep track of a list of students I've worked with, and whether
> or not they've improved. But I actually never did think to . . . keep track of what
> [services] I've recommended to them, and provide it to anyone. Mostly because
> no one has ever asked me for that. [. . .]

Document.

The Retention Office website refers to the Retention Office as "coordinating

retention activities between academic and student affairs divisions [e.g., academic

advising offices]," by "supporting and monitoring students' academic progress," making

referrals to campus resources/services, "instilling a sense of [. . .] [university]

community in our students," providing collaborative learning environments, and

"coordinating programs that foster" students' academic success. While the document

mentions monitoring, the interviews demonstrated that monitoring was about identifying,

not following up.

Formal assessment was not conducted for EWS programs, but was conducted for

non-EWS programs. Documents acquired through the institution which showed that

assessment was conducted for non-EWS programs included: the Incoming Survey Self-

Assessment Inventory documents listing students' responses to 14 questions addressed during the fall 2011 focus groups, fall 2011 email summaries for the Incoming Survey Self-Assessment Inventory, SLS training manual, SI leader training manual, SI session plans, etc.

Summary: Assessment Measures to Track and Monitor Students' Issues or Deficits.

Summary.

When asked about assessment measures, an administrator stated that "we don't evaluate! There's no real assessment [. . .] we don't have a formal assessment or evaluation to track or to evaluate the students that come in here." An administrator from the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office responded, "well, not by us," when he/she was asked about assessment, tracking, and monitoring of EWS students' issues or deficits. When asked, if not by his/her department then which department, the administrator responded, "it's possible. There is a Retention Office."

Administrators collectively stated during the interviews that formal assessment was not conducted through the early alert (faculty referral), midterm grade deficiency reporting, and freshman warning systems. Administrators stated during the interviews that once students on freshman warning were identified, to have their freshman warning hold removed, they had to successfully complete (pass with an 85% or higher) an Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory located on the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office website. Assessment results from the inventory were not forwarded to/shared with administrators and faculty. In addition, students were not required to attend workshops (or any interventions) to focus on the deficits identified in

the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory. Last, formal assessment was not conducted for EWS, but was conducted for non-EWS programs (e.g., the Multicultural Affairs' program).

How assessment measures were used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues/deficits in EWS were discussed above. The second part of this research question, explores whether university services and critical departments such as EWS are working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 2a.

Evidence showed that numerous assessment measures (e.g., midterm grade reporting, freshman warning, faculty alert) were used at the institution to identify EWS students' issues or deficits; however, they were mostly used on a broad-based level. Formal assessment measures to assess students' issues or deficits on an individual-based level were not utilized, and students' issues or deficits were assessed informally (e.g., speaking with the students, midterm grades). Also the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory used on an individual-based level was a home-grown inventory, and was required only of freshman warning and probation students; and results of the inventory was not used in meetings with students. Many assessment measures to address students' issues and deficits were present. With the exception of "referring" students to the Counseling Center, the assessment measures to address students' issues or deficits were mainly academically related and not psychologically/socially related. Finally, tracking and monitoring of EWS students (and their issues or deficits) were not conducted, as assessment measures to track and monitor did not exist.

Services/Critical Departments such as EWS Working Together

Are EWS services/critical departments working together to share students'

concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students in place at the

institution?   This question will be explored in this section of the dissertation.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Lack of Clarity Surrounding EWS Responsibility.

The first theme that emerged was a lack of clarity surrounding who was truly

responsible for student retention through EWS. Administrators seem to be confused

about who was doing what. According to some administrators who work in the

Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, "we just deal with a piece of . . . the early

warning system" and:

> Well! I know that [. . .] [someone] in the Retention Office is also following up
> with the students who receive warnings and inviting them to participate in
> tutoring and SI. Making them aware of the services that they have in place . . .
> for, you know, the classes that they . . . that they serve.

Administrators who worked in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office

noted trying to be careful about not overreaching their responsibility when it pertains to

retention, as retention was not part of their mission statement. Technically, they asserted,

EWS should not be the role of Freshman Academic Advising Services Office because

retention was the Retention Office's responsibility. Administrators' responses are quoted

below:

> [. . .] One of the things we have to be very careful about, or we try to be careful
> about, is not over-reaching our . . . our responsibility. Now we primarily look to
> providing academic advising services to students, and so . . . the . . .
> implementation of the midterm grade report was our way of trying to facilitate or
> improve student persistence and student retention, at the end of their first year.

But we have a Retention Office [. . .] whose primary . . . role is to . . . develop ways to . . . strategies and programs . . . to . . . help students persist and, and help to retain students here at the university. So . . . we . . . It's kind of a balancing act. Where our primary focus is academic advising, we also feel that we have some responsibility for contributing to students' persistence and student retention here at the university. So in that respect, that's one of the things that led us to the development of the . . . the first . . . the midterm grading reporting system. [. . .]

I think it's more because the Retention Office's role specifically is student retention. [. . .] Freshman [Academic] Advising [Services] Office is, is mostly to provide the warnings. To provide the, the advice and what not. But in terms of the programs [supplemental instruction, group or private tutoring] and what not, technically that, that should probably be . . . the Retention Office's . . . domain. And, and I think that's probably one of the reasons why [. . .] [the] impact [of the retention specialist/academic coach in Freshman Academic Advising Services Office] has been as been as small as it has. [Text combined] So they are . . . they are the . . . university retention people. [The retention specialist/academic coach is the] Freshman [Academic] Advising [Services Office] first year retention person. [. . .]

Administrators working in the Retention Office suggested, "within our [office] [. . .] we have one person who coordinates academic support, which is supplemental instruction and tutoring. Over in Freshman Academic Advising [Services Office] I believe there's somebody." EWS was not mentioned as an academic support along with supplemental instruction and tutoring. Thus, someone was not designated to specifically work with the EWS population in the Retention Office.

EWS Support from Top Administration.

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was the retention specialist/academic coach and top administrators (deans and provosts) were reaching out to faculty in an attempt to increase faculty participation. Administrators collectively stated that there was support for the program from top administration. Top administration sends letters/emails to the faculty to increase faculty participation in the EWS program. According to one administrator, which is a sentiment echoed by many

administrators, "part of the process [is] that, that you have to get your faculty to buy-in"

if you want the EWS program to be successful. Administrators stated that to get faculty

to buy-into the EWS program, around the sixth week of classes "a memo goes out to all

faculty who are teaching [. . .] [lower-division courses].

Faculty Participation in the EWS.

The third theme that emerged from the interviews was administrators collectively

stated that currently the faculty participation (e.g., submission of midterm grade reporting

system) was low (approximately 50 percent). Administrators stated that there were not a

lot of faculty referrals/early alerts. As one administrator noted, who worked directly with

the EWS program, the "faculty referral system [. . .] has sort of fallen to the wayside to a

certain extent," which he has tried to revive. He also stated that "this semester I have not

gotten any [faculty] referrals." The administrator further stated:

> [. . .] I really wanted to try to get more of a faculty integration with retention.
> And so I sent out emails to all the different departments on campus asking if I can
> meet with them to discuss you know, their ideas for retention and what might
> possibly be done within their departments. [. . .] The English department was
> really on board. The History department was really on board. The Geosciences
> department actually, was . . . was really supportive. [. . .] But [. . .] the only
> people that really . . . contributed at all, were the English professors. [. . .] I got
> maybe 20 referrals over the course of the semester. [. . .] The problem came in
> that when I . . . approach the students that I was referred to . . . all but one turned
> me down. [. . .] Once the faculty realized that this guy is reaching out to our
> students but they are not taking me up on it, they sort of stopped referring. So, it's
> been a bit of an issue, because I'm not really sure how to try to revamp that. How
> to try to get students to be willing to come in and commit. It does come down to
> that sort of resistance factor. They just don't want the help.

One reason for low participation was a lack of faculty understanding of the EWS

program and its importance. As one administrator noted, "it has taken us a while [and

urging from top administrators] to do this, is to get faculty to a point where they

understand that [. . .] freshman are eternally optimistic [. . .] they tend to not know when they are in jeopardy" and to personally participate in the program. As per the administrator, "we don't have a hun . . . I wish we had a hundred percent faculty participation." When asked about the percentage of faculty participation, the administrator responded, "probably, just under 50 percent. Just under. Somewhere between 46 and 50 percent of our faculty participate. And we certainly would like to get that to increase. And we are working with the provost to try to find out, what kinds of incentives." As per an administrator, which was echoed by other administrators:

> [. . .] We're very lucky if we can get the faculty to respond at all. So certainly having increased response rate from the faculty. What happens is, if . . . students can fail all their assignments up to midterm, and the faculty members decide not to submit early warnings for that whole class. The student thinks they're doing ok, you know. "Oh my friend got an early warning from their calculus instructor, but I didn't get one, so I must be doing ok, even though I failed the exam." [. . .]

When an administrator, who stated the percentage of faculty participation was between 46 percent and 50 percent was asked why more faculty were not participating in the EWS, the administrator responded:

> Too much work. Oftentimes, some of the excuse that we get is um, I haven't given a midterm exam yet. I haven't given a . . . I haven't given a, a quiz. Some faculty have a midterm and a final. And that's it. And so, well, the provost, we are trying to move faculty, especially for first year, we are trying to move faculty to a culture that first year students need more . . . eh . . . more opportunities for feedback and evaluation than you might think for students at the higher levels (sophomores, juniors, senior standing . . . status). Because they are coming from a high school environment where they are used to that. They are used to getting frequent evaluations. They are used to having multiple opportunities to demonstrate their proficiency or their ability. And so, for them to come into a university environment where they may have a midterm and a final, and those are your only two grades, students aren't used to that. [. . .]

The Faculty were also less likely to respond to the Dean's requests for participation. When asked why, an administrator responded that "it's culture . . . at the university; or in Higher-Ed!"

Services/Critical Departments Working Together Beyond Making (or Receiving) Submissions or Making Referrals.

The fourth theme that emerged during the interviews was the lack of relationship between services including the submission (or receiving) of midterm grades/early alerts or making referrals, but nothing beyond. An administrator's response is listed below:

> When it was paper and pencil, sometimes there was that loop [of providing feedback to faculty once they reported information about students]. But now they [faculty] just submit online. They don't submit to us. They just go into the computer. It's like they're submitting to the Registrar's Office like a final grade. So there is no feedback loop to the faculty.

Thus, information (e.g., names of EWS students, number of students reported with alert) regarding EWS was oftentimes not forwarded to departments/services unless requested, and departments/services were not taking the initiative and requesting the information. Further, feedback regarding students' progress was not shared with faculty after they reported students through the system nor was EWS assessment data discussed at departments' staff meetings. Additionally, services/critical departments were not involved in the EWS (e.g., did not receive training, their service/department were not fully incorporated) and they were not aware of certain aspects of the EWS (e.g., the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, the Banner computer software system/screen to report midterm grades).

Cross-Training and Specialty/Liaison Role.

The fifth theme that emerged during the interviews was the advisors in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office were cross-trained and had specialty/liaison roles with academic departments and/or the athletic department. As per an administrator in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, "everybody [in the office] has a liaison assignment to a college [. . .]; and so, we all have something that we are especially good at" and "all of us could advise any student coming into the university as an FTIC student, generically."

EWS was not mentioned as serving a possible liaison role in the interviews; and the Retention Office was not mentioned in connection with the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office's liaison role. Administrators from the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office also mentioned that the specialty/liaison role and cross-training focused on major and curriculum changes/requirements, rather than EWS. This demonstrated a lack of connection between the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office and Retention Office surrounding EWS.

EWS Committee.

The sixth theme that emerged during the interviews was that a EWS committee did not exist at the institution. An administrator stated:

> I . . . don't know [if there are university committees that work together to talk about EWS, that come together to work with EWS students]. That's probably a question that the [. . .] [Retention] Office would be able to better answer. I know that there are . . . a lot of committees that are in place for the Learning Communities and things like that. And the Learning Communities are often directed at promoting the academic skills. [. . .]

As noted above, administrators in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office served on committees. Administrators collectively stated that many university-wide committees existed where "representatives from all aspects of campus" make up (and partake in) the committees; however, there are no committees (within the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, and cross-campus) designated for (or that focuses on) EWS; thereby, confirming that university-wide collaboration does not exist at the institution for EWS.

Document.

In terms of the theme regarding lack of clarity surrounding EWS responsibility, documents such as the human resource job description, supported the statement made by administrators in the Retention Office that the role of the coordinator of academic support in the Retention Office was to oversee "the university's Supplemental Instruction (SI) program and [coordinate] tutoring efforts throughout the university," and did not include participation in the EWS.

In terms of the theme regarding EWS support from top administration, a copy of the memorandum from the provost to the faculty was acquired from the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, which confirmed the theme regarding support from top administration to encourage faculty to buy-into (and participate in) the EWS program. The document stated that EWS is a "critical issue." It also stated that the university faculty senate "endorsed efforts by Freshman Academic Advising [Services Office] [. . .] to retain freshman students by tracking their academic progress at mid-semester"; and as a result of this effort, "ask[s] that [. . .] *faculty* enter mid-semester grades [through the Banner computer software system] for the courses that [. . .] *they* teach in [. . .] *the*

lower-division courses [italics added]." The document stated that to simplify the process for faculty members who are teaching large classes, faculty could choose to record only grades that are "C-" or below. The document also confirmed that to get faculty to buy-into (and increase participation in) the program, the faculty should be made aware of the program and be told why the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office and provost were making the request. The document did not reference EWS committees, and faculty participation on any campus-wide EWS committees.

To address the theme regarding services/critical departments such as EWS not working together to share students' information to benefit students, numerous documents (e.g., the Incoming Survey flyer, Incoming Survey call campaign objective and calling script, and email noting important Incoming Survey Self-Assessment Inventory information) were acquired. The Freshman Academic Advising Services Office website was also used to explore liaison roles and cross-training mentioned during the interviews, which did not reference EWS.

Summary.

Numerous themes emerged during the interviews regarding services/critical departments such as EWS not working together to share students' issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc, to benefit students. They included: there was a lack of clarity surrounding who is truly responsible for student retention through EWS; there was top administrator support for EWS; faculty participation in EWS was low; and services/critical departments working together to share student information did not extend beyond sending (or receiving) submissions such as midterm grade progress reports or early alerts. In addition, with the exception of the one administrator in the Freshman Academic Advising

154

Office who served as the retention specialist/academic coach, advisors were not cross-trained nor did they have specialty/liaison roles in EWS; and, the cross-training and specialty/liaison roles in the Freshman Academic Advising Office did not include the Retention Office and EWS.

Additionally, a university-wide committee did not exist at the institution for (or that focuses on) EWS, even though the retention memorandum document states that the focus to maximize results (improve retention) should include a university-wide commitment that focuses on first-year students; a Council should be established to "continually monitor lower division educational policies and their effect on student retention"; and "academic support and student life issues must all be readdressed in a comprehensive manner" (retention memorandum, 2005, p. 10-11).

As noted above, services/critical departments were not working together to share information regarding EWS students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students. However, the Learning Communities, Incoming Survey Self-Assessment Inventory, and DFW courses, all conducted through the Retention Office, were frequently shared with services/departments across the institution.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 2b.

It was noted that there was uncertainty and confusion surrounding who was truly responsible for student retention through EWS: the Academic Advising Office or the Retention Office. Furthermore, the services/critical departments just mentioned (along with other services/critical departments) were not working together to share students' information to benefit students. For example: (a) the Academic Advising Services Office did not communicate about EWS and share EWS students' information with the

Retention Office and other services/critical departments, (b) services/critical departments did not participate beyond submitting (or receiving) midterm grades/early alerts or making referrals, (c) faculty did not receive feedback regarding students submitted, (d) the Academic Advising Services Office's retention specialist/academic coach designated to work with EWS did not receive students' information when working with students, (e) someone was not designated in the Retention Office to work with EWS, and EWS was not mentioned as an academic support in the office, (f) EWS committee did not exist within the Academic Advising Services Office, and university-wide, (g) cross-training and speciality liason roles in the Academic Advising Services Office did not include EWS, and the Retention Office and faculty were not included as liason roles; and (h) even though there was EWS support from top administration, faculty participation in the EWS (e.g., midterm grade reporting, faculty alerts/referrals) was low.

Administrators' Perspectives of Students' Experiences,

Development, and Retention Issues

The third research question explored administrators' perspectives of students' experiences, development, and retention issues. Regarding students' retention issues, administrators were asked to describe students' self-esteem, greatest needs, academic skill weaknesses, and ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Administrators were also asked to describe why students were not doing well academically, describe why students are not being successful/do not succeed, discuss colleagues' shared opinions regarding students' lack of success, and discuss who colleagues blamed (hold accountable) for student failure. In addition to describing and

elaborating on the above mentioned topics, administrators were also asked to describe what they believed students were experiencing (setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.) in the EWS program. These topics are explored below.

Students' Retention Issues

Administrators were asked numerous questions regarding students' retention issues or deficits. Many themes emerged regarding students' retention issues or deficits during the interviews, including: time management, lack of/poor skills, lack of/poor preparation, motivation, autonomy, and lack of maturity. Subthemes also emerged for certain topics. These themes and subthemes are presented below.

Students' Retention Issues: Students' Self-Esteem

Administrators' Interview Responses: Difficult to Assess Students' Self-Esteem Because Self-Esteem Varied and Ranged Widely.

Many administrators stated that it was very difficult for them to assess EWS students' self-esteem. Administrators' interview responses are summarized in the quotation below:

> [. . .] I don't know that we really are in a position to assess their self-esteem. Because again, we don't . . . The students aren't required to come in. They're not required to come see us [the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office]. That invitation is extended to them. [. . .] You might get a better sense from the [. . .] [Second-Year Retention] program in terms of . . . the self-esteem of their students. Because they, the second year students who have either been suspended or on probation and they are required . . . Now, those students are required. They have to. It's mandatory that they participate. Well, the suspended students are required to participate in the program. The probation students are not required, but . . . they are strongly encouraged. [. . .]

Many administrators went on to state that students' self-esteem varied and/or ranged widely. Administrators thought that students' self-esteem varied in that there was

not just one kind of "self-esteem" or that it was a mixture. They observed that students'

self-esteem ranged from high, too high, eternally optimistic, and overinflated to low and

very low.

Inflated Self-Esteem. A subtheme that emerged regarding students' self-esteem

was students had an inflated self-esteem. Administrators who stated that some students

had "healthy" or "strong" self-esteem suggested that they "typically have done well in

high school" and are "shocked when they get the letter" or "shocked at the fact that

they're not doing well in college." Administrators noted too that students with higher

self-esteem tended to "not know when they are in jeopardy," "overestimate their

abilities", "don't think they need to change their approach", "come into the university

thinking they are [not] going to need . . . services [e.g., tutoring, SI, among others]", and

"do not seek help" through services or seek out resources; and as a result, "[. . .] end up

not doing well," as summarized in the following quotation:

> Freshman, are eternally optimistic people. They . . . they tend to not know when
> they are in jeopardy. They have this . . . Their thought process is such that they
> may have failed all of their exams up to this point. But in their minds, they still
> have 8 weeks left in the semester, so they have time to make it up. They can fix
> this somehow. And what's interesting is, most of them believe that they reconcile
> the situation, but they don't . . . They don't understand that it takes some sort of a
> action plan to reconcile. [. . .] And maybe they are working hard at doing the
> things they've always done, and it's just not changing things. So they don't . . .
> Behaviorally, they don't see the need to make a change in their approach so that
> they might improve. And so, that's what we found was happening with our
> freshman, is that they understood that they were maybe not getting the best of
> grades; but they didn't understand that something had to change. That there had
> to be a behavioral modification in order for them to improve. And so, that was
> the part that they weren't getting.

Low Self-Esteem. A second subtheme that emerged was students with lower self-

esteem were usually the students who tried and could not accomplish it, cared about how

158

they were performing, and sought help through different services/resources when they

recognized they were in jeopardy or needed help resolving their EWS situation. This is

summarized in the following quotations:

> Some . . . some have very low self-esteem. And the lowest are the ones that goes
> to the Counseling Center. Because that's when all of a sudden the emotional
> aspects are a real problem. And are going to prohibit them from being able to
> improve. [. . .]

> The ones [with lower self-esteem] who seek our help and come to our office,
> those are the ones who care . . . that care. Those are not the students who are like
> "oh well. This is what happened and I'm just gonna deal with it." Those are not
> the ones that get upset. The student who gets upset at and . . . I've had students
> who sit and cry who are on probation. So, the students who seek out our . . . our
> help, are the ones who care, and the ones that try and didn't realize they . . . they're
> failing. And they get this letter and they didn't realize that they . . . there GPA
> was so low. Those are the ones who seek our help. The other ones don't even
> seek our help.

Summary.

The major theme that emerged was that it was very difficult to assess EWS

students' self-esteem because it was not just one thing and that it ranged widely.

Administrators stated that it is difficult to assess students' self-esteem, because students

in the EWS program were not tracked or surveyed. Further, the following sub-themes

emerged: some students' self-esteem was inflated, while others' was low. Students with

high (or over-inflated) self-esteem were usually successful high school students,

overestimated their abilities, did not think they needed help, and did not seek services;

yet, later experienced shock when they received a letter stating they were not doing well.

In contrast, students with low self-esteem were usually the students who tried and were

not successful, cared about how they were performing, and sought help through different

services/resources when needing help with their EWS situation.

Students' Retention Issues: Greatest Needs; Academic Skill Weaknesses; Reasons Why Students Are Not Doing Well Academically; Explanation Why Students Are Not Successful/Do Not Succeed; Shared Explanation for Students' Lack of Success; and Accountability (Colleagues Complaint about Student Failure)

Administrators' Interview Responses: Time Management.

The majority of administrators identified lack of/poor time management as a great need; academic skill weakness as a reason why students were not doing well academically, shared explanation as to why students were not successful, and accountability (what their colleagues say when they complain about student failure). Some administrators also referenced procrastination in connection with poor time management as another reason why students were not doing well academically. Another administrator also stated that time management was an academic skills weakness for students upon entering the university and was connected to lack of discipline. According to the administrator, students had a difficult time "actually sticking to that study schedule that they worked out." Indeed, without discipline, "all that [time management] knowledge is meaningless." The time management theme is summarized in the following quotations:

> [. . .] Actually, if you ask our students, typically, they will tell you the thing that is the most difficult for them, the most challenging for them, was learning how to manage their time. They just . . . They have a difficult time prioritizing and figuring out . . . what's important and how to control their time. [. . .] They can't visualize or prioritize their time appropriately. And . . . that's the one thing they probably struggle with the most. Time Management.

160

[. . .] That they are lazy. That they procrastinate (wait til the last minute). Poor time management [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Skills

The majority of administrators identified skills (critical thinking; note-taking; and/or academic skills such as writing, reading, math, English, and science, etc.) or a lack thereof as an important issue.

Critical Thinking Skill. In terms of critical thinking as an academic skills weakness, an administrator stated that "it's definitely critical thinking and figuring out why they have to take what they need to take." In terms of the theme for critical thinking as a greatest need, administrators stated that critical thinking evolves as students mature and learn to do (and are given autonomy to do) things on their own, take control of (and have ownership for) their education and future, and find satisfaction in their success/progress. The critical thinking skill theme is summarized in the following quotation:

> Critical thinking is the first thing that comes to mind. But I think that's a bit of a maturity factor. It's something that has to be developed through experience, to a certain extent. I would say critical thinking for one [is a greatest need]. [. . .]

Academic Skills (Writing, Reading, Math, English, and Science). In terms of writing, reading, math, English, and science, as academic skills weaknesses, administrators collectively stated that students lacked these skills or had poor skills. This theme is summarized below:

> Well that depends on which faculty member you talk to. If you talk to the English faculty, it's the writing skills. If you talk to the Math faculty, it's their math skills. [. . .]

161

[. . .] They don't have the skills that they developed in high school. So they don't have the strong math background. They don't have the strong writing background. [. . .]

Administrators collectively stated that students were not developing the aforementioned skills in high school; as a result, entered college lacking basic skills such as note-taking, thinking on their own, determining what was important and what will be asked on a test, deciphering text, and applying what was learned in the classroom to other course settings and the real world.

Study Skills and Note-Taking Skills. The majority of the administrators stated that lack of study skills was a reason why students were not doing well academically, and a shared explanation (more than one reason) was why students were not successful. This is summarized in the following quotation:

> Poor study habits. And they . . . they don't like to read. They don't! They don't like reading. [. . .] But poor study habits primarily. Poor time management. Those probably are the two primary ones. [. . .] They're not great writers. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Lack of Preparation.

Many administrators identified lack of preparation as a shared explanation why students were not successful. Administrators collectively stated that students lacked preparation (ability, preparation in certain areas, and development of certain skills in high school); and as a result, entered college lacking a strong math (and other academic) background and an understanding of (and preparation to deal with) academic rigor. Administrators also stated that students had poor study habits, were not great writers, and lacked the ability to articulate or express themselves verbally or through their writing. Additionally, administrators stated that the transition from high school to college was

162

more challenging when students were viewing college as merely an extension of high

school. The following quotations summarize the theme:

> I think the transition from high school to college is more challenging than it's ever been. For a lot, this is the first time they have ever had to study, or manage their own behavior, their own daily plan. I think sometimes they struggle with the transition of becoming self-sufficient, independent . . . adults. And, that can . . . delay their academic success until they figure out how to manage themselves.

> I would say the . . . number one, is the lack of preparedness. You know, there are some students who are . . . who have just not . . . prepared themselves . . . to deal with the rigor of academia. And . . . and then I would say . . . students lack of . . . commitment to . . . their studies . . . and/or . . . assistance in their studies. So, spending the required amount of time really to do homework, and study for exams, and to really put that time in their, and/or to ask for help. Students sometime, for whatever reason, have trouble asking for help.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Autonomy.

Many administrators identified autonomy as a problem. Administrators stated

that trying to do things on their own and guided autonomy were students' greatest needs.

Administrators also stated that students were not taking ownership of their education,

lacked commitment, were not seeking out resources/help with their studies, lacked effort

and engagement in the campus community, did not like to read, and were not trying hard

enough. Administrators also stated that this is the first time that students ever had to

study or manage their own behavior; and as a result, they struggled with being self-

independent.

> [. . .] That [autonomy] is the hardest thing for them to come to terms with. And when they get to the college level is that, a lot more self-learning and self-investment is involved in the learning process, and that they have to . . . they have to study a little more than they did as high school students in order to be successful.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Motivation.

Many administrators identified motivation as an issue as well. Administrators

stated that many students were extrinsically motivated and/or unmotivated and that their

parents influenced their motivation. The motivation theme is summarized in the

following quotations.

> I think it's just all the things I just said about "this student is not trying. They're not seeking out the resources. They know what they are, but they're just too lazy to do it. That's what we see a lot in the freshman . . . Or they're so overwhelmed that the students don't know where to turn. [. . .]

> [. . .] They are failing the course. They are withdrawing from the course. They are not passing the course. And I think it's . . . I know it's because they lack that motivation to do anything beyond what they have to do. [. . .] So, I think that motivation is our biggest obstacle.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Maturity.

Lack of maturity was mentioned as a reason why students are not doing well. The

theme of maturity is summarized in the following administrator's response, "I'll go back

to poor study habits. Poor time management skills . . . Yeah. And a lack of maturity."

Administrators' Interview Responses: Information/Knowledge.

Many administrators identified information/knowledge as a major issue. Accurate

and timely information, knowledge of services/resources offered, and availability of

knowledgeable and caring faculty and staff were identified as the students' greatest

needs. This theme is summarized in the following quotations:

> [. . .] I suppose . . . accurate and timely information would be a need. Availability of . . . knowledgeable . . . and caring . . . faculty and staff would be a need.

> [. . .] The students want us to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If they have a question and it takes an hour to respond to an email, that's not appropriate. They need to know the answer right then and there. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Academic Support.

Many administrators identified academic support as a greatest need.
Administrators stated that tutoring, supplemental instruction, and resources offered were
needed greatly. This theme is summarized in the quotation below:

> [. . .] They need to have support. They need to have . . . they need to know there
> are people who care whether they are successful or not. And they need to know
> there are expectations for their academic performance. But at the same time, they
> need to have the freedom to make those decisions. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Financial Aid.

A few administrators identified financial aid as a greatest need. In terms of the
theme of financial aid as a greatest need, an administrator stated:

> [. . .] I would say the greatest need also is financial aid. Our students are in dire
> need of finances in terms of paying for tuition and other things like that.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Psychological Issues/Deficits.

An administrator responded when asked the reasons why students were not doing
well academically: "wow . . . I mean there's a lot. Students are coming with more mental
health issues. Complex issues . . . Coping mechanisms - - coping issues. Adjustment
issues." Another administrator also stated that "there are a lot more reasons than what I
gave." This theme was also echoed by other administrators interviewed.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Distractions and Work.

Distractions and work also emerged as reasons why students were not doing well
academically. Some administrators stated that the institution was a commuter school;
with lots of students having familial obligations outside of school and/or having to work
full-time to support themselves, their family, and/or finance their education. An
administrator stated that as a result, the institution "can't be their first priority, because

they wouldn't be able to afford it otherwise if they aren't working 30, 40 hours a week

and then going to school."

Administrators' Interview Responses: Learning Styles.

In terms of the theme for learning styles as an explanation for why students were

not succeeding, an administrator stated that students often had learning styles that might

not correspond with the professor's teaching styles.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Instant Gratification, Bureaucratic

Nonsense, and Community Aspect.

An administrator also suggested that students' lack of success was a reflection of

society's (and students') growth toward the perception of instant gratification,

bureaucratic nonsense, and community aspects (e.g., little school pride, non-academic

responsibilities). A quotation summarizing this theme is listed below:

> [. . .] I think it's pretty similar to what I mention about . . . issues of motivation.
> Issues of sort of a pro-longed adolescence. Not really taking ownership of their
> own education. I think too the . . . the societal implications are huge. Those,
> those messages that say, you know "you've gotta scape by. You've gotta beat the
> system." "You know you have to do the bare minimum . . . and you know . . . you
> can have your cake and eat it too type of thing, type of thing." I, I think our
> society has grown towards an instant gratification . . . perception. And that has
> really infected our student body. The other side of it I think too is the community
> aspect. One of the things that [. . .] [Institution X] has had a problem with
> historically [. . .] [is] how little sense of school pride there is here, you know! [.
> . .] There's [also] bureaucratic nonsense that interferes with your ability to get
> into classes that you need, or to take the classes that you need, or graduate on
> time, or even the process is just so convoluted, and the billing processes. And all
> these little things that shouldn't really be complicated, that are. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Personal, Health, and Other Issues.

An administrator also mentioned personal, health, and other issues as an

explanation for students' lack of success:

[. . .] Some of them have personal . . . health, other issues that prevent them from succeeding. Some of the them have conflicts of interest, they're torn between working a job and going to school. Some of them are just having a really good time. So, I don't think you can pinpoint any one specific reason. [. . .]

Summary.

Time management, skills (e.g., critical thinking, academic, note-taking, and study skills), lack of/poor preparation, autonomy, motivation, and maturity were themes identified in majority of the questions regarding students' retention issues or deficits. Information/knowledge, academic support, financial aid, psychological issues/deficits, distraction and work, learning styles, and instant gratification orientation and bureaucratic nonsense were also mentioned as themes for certain questions regarding students' retention issues or deficits. A majority of the administrators collectively stated that academic skills (writing, reading, math, English, and science) and basic note-taking skills are also connected to critical thinking skills. In addition to some of the skills just mentioned, an administrator also stated that maybe the reason students were not successful (or do not succeed) was not solely because of the student:

> I think a lot of it has to do with the parents. I think a lot of it has to do with the individual motivation of the student. I mean I can't blame it all on the student. Maybe we're not providing what the student needs for that particular student. [. . .]

Students' Retention Issues: Students' Ability to Analyze, Synthesize, and Evaluate Information

Administrators' Interview Responses.

All of the administrators stated that students lacked the ability to do higher order thinking, that is, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Administrators collectively stated too that students needed to do higher order thinking and there needed

to be more of it in the college setting. The following are excerpts from administrators'

interviews regarding students' ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information:

> [. . .] It's my sense that a lot of freshman faculty . . . [long pause] . . . don't
> see…don't necessarily see the students . . . having any real strong ability to . . .
> synthesize or analyze information at this particular junction. But I mean as they
> progress . . . those skills . . . evolve . . . and become stronger. [. . .]

> I think that a lot of it again, it's the . . . lack of some student's ability to get to the
> higher level orders of thinking. That they, you know, they'll come into the office
> and say that they are struggling . . . they struggled and they studied hard for the
> exam and that they didn't do well. And because they're getting to surface level
> and memorizing the information enough to regurgitate it, and not internalizing it
> and understanding it, not analyzing it and putting it into their own words. [. . .]

Summary.

Themes that emerged regarding students' ability to analyze, synthesize, and

evaluate information were students lacked the ability to perform such types of higher

order thinking, students needed to learn more higher order thinking, and more higher

order thinking needs to be available to students. As some administrators had pointed out,

this inability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information was very closely related to

critical thinking (the ability to decipher, internalize, understand, and put information into

own words). Critical thinking skill was a response to other questions regarding students'

retention issues or deficits.

Students' Retention Issues: Accountability (Who Colleagues Blame For

Student Failure)

When administrators were asked whom colleagues blamed for student failure,

administrators collectively stated that students were blamed for their own failure.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Students Are Blamed For Their Own

Failure.

According to two administrators, "it's not atypical for faculty to believe that

students are their [own] worst enemy." Thus, the collective theme that emerged was

colleagues blamed students for their own failure. Additional administrators' responses

are quoted below:

> The student! Like I said, they don't try hard enough, or they're not doing . . .
> they're not going to office hours, they're not going to SI, they're not going to
> tutoring. Usually the student!
>
> For, for algebra class I would say the department. But in general, I would say the
> students. I mean, just because, it's, it's their responsibility. [. . .] And they [the
> departments] say, "there is only so much that you can do." You know. "You can,
> you can only provide so many resource before it's completely the students'
> responsibility. And you know, they just want the grade unfortunately a lot of the
> time. Not necessarily to attend class or put in the work." So, at the end of the
> day, I would say the students.

Subthemes that emerged from this question include the program is voluntary and

students are well informed of services. These subthemes are discussed below.

The Program Is Voluntary. In terms of the first subtheme, many administrators

responded that because the EWS program is voluntary, students are blamed or held

accountable for not going to class, not putting in the effort and studying, and not taking

advantage of the programs or services that are available/offered, which are summarized

below:

> [. . .] It's not mandatory that they respond to the information that we provide
> them with [in EWS]. It is us relying on them to . . . to take the information
> [through email] that they receive and choose to do something with it. If they
> don't, then, it is what it is. But, it's our way of saying "look, this is what we note.
> You may or may not be aware of it." More than likely they are. "But this is a
> potential problem. Here is how you can rectify this if you so choose." So again,
> it's really a voluntary response on the part of the student if they choose to take

advantage of the information we are providing, and, and do something about the situation they find themselves in.

Administrators also collectively stated that "the ones who show up [for the EWS and/or workshops that are conducted] are the ones who [care and] want to be there! And, yes, they tend to be successful." As another administrator stated:

> The ones who seek our help and come to our office, those are the ones who care . . . that care. Those are not the students who are like "oh well. This is what happened and I'm just gonna deal with it." Those are not the ones that get upset. The student who gets upset at and . . . I've had students who sit and cry who are on probation. So, the students who seek out our . . . our help, are the ones who care, and the ones that try and didn't realize they . . . they're failing. And they get this letter and they didn't realize that they . . . there GPA was so low. Those are the ones who seek our help. The other ones don't even seek our help.

Students Are Well Informed of Services. In terms of the second subtheme, all administrators stated that students were to blame (held accountable) for their own success because students are well informed of the services available to them; however, students lacked engagement in the campus community and have not chosen to take advantage of the services:

> One of the things we try to do is make sure students are well informed. And so if students know that there are services available and choose not to take it, that's one thing. But we try to make sure the students are not . . . uninformed. [. . .]

> They blame the student . . . when they talk about student failure. Typically. Because [. . .] we typically offer a lot of resources for students. Through tutoring, supplemental instruction, the Writing Center. I mean, so many. We find that when students fail it's typically because of their lack of engagement in the campus community. Not asking for help. Not . . . recognizing when they're not doing well. [. . .] The students fail to tap into the resources.

Document.

Regarding the numerous retention issues themes listed above, documents acquired through the institution's website state that "academic in universities run at a much faster

pace than in high school" and "in high school students were given all the information they needed. In college it is a students' job to collect, interpret, and learn the materials." Thus, there is a high need for considerable self-direction and therefore higher order thinking skill to succeed in college.

Documentations acquired through the department and/or the institution's websites stated in terms of blame for student failure (accountability): "it is the students' responsibility to attend class and also to seek out the professor during posted office hours"; students are encouraged to "take ownership of your education and seek out the support or advice of an advisor"; and "it is the students' responsibility to keep up with assignments, class group meetings, changes in the syllabus [. . .] [among others]. Academic planners are also available for free to every student." Similar statements were also echoed by many administrators interviewed.

Additionally, the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office's website in conjunction with other institutional websites were used to explore the theme regarding students being well informed of the services available, but not taking advantage of them. The websites encouraged students to "periodically meet with the advisor" and "inform [. . .] *their* advisor of any changes that directly affect academic performance and educational goals." The websites also encouraged students to "contact [. . .] *their* advisor if [. . .] *they* run into any academic difficulty" and/or "have been placed on freshman warning or probation or have any problems/concerns [. . .] *they* want to discuss [italics added]." For example, contacting their advisor regarding "unsatisfactory performance and its implications so that appropriate remedies can be initiated."

Summary.

Administrators collectively stated that students were to blame for their own

failure because the EWS program was voluntary and students were well informed of

services. Administrators also referenced student responsibility as a major issue, in that

they needed to take responsibility for their own learning, development, and eventual

success.

Though not mentioned collectively during the interviews, parents' interference or

parents not pushing students, the institution, certain departments (e.g., the math

department in terms of students not succeeding in algebra), insufficient staffing, and poor

academic development when emerging from the K-12 educational context were also

mentioned in some interviews as reasons for students' failure, which also related to

accountability (blame for student failure).

> [. . .] I can't blame it all on the student. Maybe we're not providing what the student needs for that particular student [. . .]

> [. . .] Again, when you're talking about the number of students we are dealing with, we can't possibly see all of them in our office. We don't have the staffing. So we try . . . So we try to put some things out there [. . .].

> [. . .] Other times we will comment on a parent's interference [. . .]. You know, we'll talk about parents interfering. And we'll talk about you know, how they haven't learned yet.

> I mean there is one thing that we tend to talk to the departments about with, and that's, that's with algebra. Because there is such a floored level effect with that class. I mean, students who do very well otherwise really struggle in Algebra. And part of it is part of it is because their assignment and their test and what not are all done online, on computer program. [. . .] I almost think of it as an epidemic. [. . .]

> [. . .] I think that if you ask many people in Higher-Ed, they're gonna blame K through 12; and say that K through 12 isn't preparing them. We can go in . . . I can spend another hour talking to you about FCAT. [. . .] But, I don't know that

the K through 12 system, particularly in this state, is preparing students. I think there's a huge . . . break in between what they're getting in high school and what we are expecting them to have already when they get here. And even in some of the basic skills like note-taking [. . .].

[. . .] So they always blame . . . either their preparation at the K-12 level, their parents for not pushing them to do things [. . .].

In addition to describing students' retention issues, which were discussed above, administrators were also asked to describe students' learning and development, and what they believed students were experiencing (setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.) in the EWS program, which is described below.

Students' EWS Experience and Students' Learning and Development

Students' Learning and Development.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

When discussing topics related to student retention issues, administrators collectively stated that students lacked: pertinent skills (academic and other skills), intrinsic motivation to succeed, time management, the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, along with having psychological/social issues. Additionally, students too often had either an overinflated or low self-esteem, which prevented them from recognizing when they were in jeopardy of not succeeding. Administrators also stated that more students were coming into the university "externally motivated rather than intrinsically motivated." As one administrator suggested, this state of affairs could impact students' self-esteem because they tended to see college as "entitlement," "continued escape from adulthood," and "prolonged adolescent and stuff like that,"

173

which leads to more students coming into college thinking "it's going to be a piece of cake."

When discussing accountability for student failure, some administrators declared that the blame for students' lack of learning and development is placed on the institution (e.g., certain departments, the institution may not be providing what students need) and/or the K-12 school system.

Math Development. An administrator described students' greatest academic skill weakness as "probably math! We seem to have a culture where math is . . . is a real challenge for a lot of students." In addition to academic skills weaknesses, math was also mentioned as a reason for students not doing well academically in many topics on students' retention issues. As noted by an administrator, "they don't have the skills that they developed in high school. So they don't have the strong math background." Math development need was a theme that was echoed by many of the administrators.

When asked if there was a developmental program that addressed students' developmental needs such as the academic skills weaknesses (e.g., math, English), the theme that emerged was the institution did not have programs in place that addressed students' developmental needs. For instance, students entering with low SAT or ACT math scores were not served by the university per se. In terms of this subtheme, administrators collectively stated that the institution did not admit and/or offer remedial coursework; thus, students had to complete any remediation needs at the community college. Still, attempts had been made in the recent past. One administrator indicated that the Bridges program used to consist of math development in addition to English

174

development; however, the institution "had a difficult time remediating a math

deficiency," and it was eliminated from the Bridges program:

> [. . .] We have a . . . more difficult time remediating a math deficiency. I think that students . . . We used to offer two tracks in our [. . .] [Bridge] program. If they have lower writing, they would go to our writing track. If they have lower math abilities they would go to our math track. We found that we can't remediate math deficiency in 6 weeks. So, we've eliminated that end of it because it wasn't working. [. . .]

In terms of the subtheme, administrators collectively stated that students who

lacked math skills (or do not have the entering SAT, ACT, or GPA) were either: required

to remediate at the community college before enrolling because the institution does not

remediate math, complete an elective intermediate algebra course (that is supported

through the Retention Offices' tutoring and Math Center), or take a math placement test

at the university known as ALEKS. Information regarding the ALEKS math placement

is also found on the university's website, which stated that ALEKS is:

> A mandatory placement exam [. . .] for incoming students [. . .] [regardless of AP, IB, dual enrollment, and CLEP credits; and transfer students with no prior college-level math] to assess math proficiency and skill level. Students take the exam over the Internet and as many times as desired. The highest score is used to determine placement.

According to one administrator, intermediate algebra was "not necessarily . . .

structured as a remedial program, and supplemental instruction is no way remedial in any

way. But we make sure they [. . .] have that foundational knowledge." Administrators

also stated that the intermediate algebra is offered "so students in that area can build the

skills they need to be successful in mathematics, which then would carry over to some of

the science areas as well." The subthemes described above for math development, are

summarized in the following administrator's response:

175

Well, we don't admit students that are remedial. Over the past few . . . We used to, and we had them do, do [. . .] [a request] to take the course at a state college, formerly community college. We've increased our admissions standards over the years so that we no longer do that. We do have students . . . In order to get into math though, they also have to take an online math placement test called ALEKS. And when they complete the math placement test based on their score, if they don't score high enough to get into a college level math course, then they have to do something to remediate that. They can do that by taking a course at the community college. Or they have online modules through ALEKS that they can complete.

English Development. English was mentioned related to many retention issue

topics. In terms of students' developmental English needs, administrators stated that

students who lacked English skills (which is determined through their SAT or ACT

scores) and/or who did not meet the institution's GPA entrance requirement (but who

administrators felt could be successful at the institution) were funneled into the Bridge

program prior to the fall semester to develop their writing skills and learn student success

strategies:

We . . . we're not allowed as a state university to offer remedial coursework. So we don't! But we do have . . . a few things. We do have . . . a Summer Bridge program [. . .]. And through [. . .] [the Bridge program] students take a writing . . . an intensive writing type course. So that helps prepare them better for English Composition. And those students, although they came in with lower test scores that might have indicated that they might struggle in writing, they do just as well in the first year English courses as students in our normal group of admitted students at the lower quartile. So, we do have updated tracks that shows they are successful in their writing. [. . .]

Document.

DFW and SI documents (e.g., list of DFW courses for FALL 2011, and SI

participation and course grades from Fall 2012) acquired through the Retention Office,

showed that the majority of the courses (e.g., math, science, and engineering) reported

most frequently with high DFW were math based courses.

During one of the interviews, an administrator mentioned STEM initiative and writing across the curriculum in response to the question regarding developmental programs at the institution to address students' developmental needs, as noted below:

> [To address students' writing, and math, and science academic skill weaknesses] the president has . . . is got on a wave with STEM. I don't know if you've heard of the STEM initiative? Which talks about the sciences and the mathematics is one way. And then the university a couple years ago instituted writing across the curriculum. So, instituting more writing. We do have a Writing Center on campus now, that will help students; and proofing their papers, and honing in on their skills. So I would say those are the two initiatives: the STEM initiative (S.T.E.M.) and the writing across the curriculum.

Documentation confirming the STEM initiative and its relationship to math development could not be located on the institution's website for the study. However, documentation regarding writing across the curriculum was acquired through the institution's website. Documentation indicated that writing to-learn activities were promoted across all levels and disciplines to help students develop critical thinking skills and inquiry, learn course content specific to each discipline, and understand and improve competence across disciplines. Additionally, documents acquired through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office stated that in terms of the English course and learning and human development (SLS) course, the English course focused on developing writing skills and techniques (e.g., grammar, punctuation, and mechanics), which were transferable to other courses requiring writing and professional life. The same documents also state that the learning and human development (SLS) course also aimed to help students "develop a better understanding of the learning process and acquire critical academic success skills" through topics such as time management, test-taking, and study techniques, etc.

Summary.

In addition to other academic retention issues and non-academic retention issues (e.g., lack of critical thinking skills), Math and English (e.g., reading, writing) academic retention issues were also collectively identified as learning and developmental needs.

In terms of themes, administrators collectively stated: the institution did not remediate students, and developmental programs did not exist at the institution. Documents (DFW and SI) demonstrated that math was the most frequently reported (and highest reported) courses. Documentation regarding a STEM initiative for math could not be located. In terms of subtheme for math development, administrators collectively stated that students with math needs were required either to go to the community college for remediation before beginning at the university, complete an elective intermediate algebra course (that is supported through tutoring in the Retention Office and the Math Learning Center) at the university, or take a math placement test at the university known as ALEKS.

Documentation regarding writing across the curriculum, which was acquired through the institution's website and documents acquired through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, stated that students' English learning and developmental needs were addressed through writing across the curriculum at all levels and in all disciplines, English courses, and/or the SLS learning and development course. In terms of subtheme for English development, administrators collectively stated that students with English developmental needs were funneled into the Summer Bridge program prior to fall enrollment at the university. Math was not mentioned as a developmental area.

An administrator responded to the probing questions regarding development

programs at the institution that if institutions admitted these students, then they had a

responsibility to provide them with the help they needed to persist and be successful. The

administrator's response is quoted below:

> [. . .] That if, if students need that much developmental or remedial, that's the
> purpose of community college. Then community colleges can provide that
> opportunity, and then transfer on to the university. So there are some people who
> believe that certain students shouldn't come straight to the university. [. . .] And
> there are other people who say "well, you admit them, then you have a
> responsibility to make sure they are successful." And I agree with that. If you are
> going to admit students into the college, then you have a responsibility to provide
> . . . to meet them where they are, and to help them get to where they need to be.
> To help them persist and be successful.

Students' Experience in the EWS Program

Administrators' Interview Responses.

The EWS Program is Not a Physical Program.

With regards to students' experience in the EWS program (setting, feeling,

reaction, etc.), administrators who worked directly with the EWS program collectively

stated that it is not a physical program where students had to respond, and it was not

designed to address students' issues unless they actually visited the office. This theme is

summarized in the following quotations:

> It's not a program in that students have to physically do anything in response to
> the notice that they get. Our primary concern is making sure that students are
> one, aware that there is a potential that they will not be successful in the course.
> And two, that there are mechanisms, strategies, things that they can do to offset
> that if they choose to. They're not required. They are not required. It's not
> required. It's not mandatory that they participate. It's not mandatory that they
> respond to the information that we provide them with. [. . .]

Well, I don't know if there's an early warning program per say. I know that . . . they've changed their philosophy in the past couple of years. I know that . . . And I don't know if they did this for this past semester, but the semester previous, they sent out notifications to students stating "you have received an early warning" but they didn't tell them what the warning was in. But they tell them to come in and meet with their academic advisor to find out. [. . .]

Students Not Surveyed. In terms of a subtheme, an administrator stated that they had never surveyed students to determine what students were feeling in (or how they felt about) the EWS program "Well, I have to be honest and say, we have never surveyed our students to see how they feel about the early warning, or the . . . the early warning or midterm grading program."

Students Who Are Alerted Do Not Go Into the Office for Assistance.

Administrators collectively stated a lot of students did not even go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office (or respond to the notification) when notification letters were sent. During discussion of services offered frequently at the institution, administrators collectively stated in terms of EWS' impact on retention that many students were reported through the midterm grade reporting system and freshman warning; however, many students do not seek assistance. Further, there was a lack of participation from students when they received the midterm grade reports. Administrators stated that students' low participation was a weakness in the program. Quotations summarizing the EWS program's impact on retention and the subtheme of students' low participation in the program are listed below:

> [. . .] When midterm grades come out as they have this week, I send an email to every student that is doing poorly (you know, "C-" or below in 3 or more classes) and offer my services. And, I emailed over a hundred students and I've heard back from about 3. So . . . that's a little bit of a frustration. [. . .]

Well . . . if the early warning system is . . . is just the faculty members . . . putting the grades up. If that's what we're calling the program. [. . .] So it gives us a little bit of knowledge for that. So, it helps us a little bit in identifying the issue. I think that if the student follows through and meets with their academic advisor, then you can get to all of those pieces. But they don't always follow through. And, I think that's a weakness of it [. . .]

When administrators in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office were asked to elaborate on the general EWS student population (the number of students who received early warnings/mid-term grade reports and the number of students who responded) an administrator stated the following:

[. . .] I may start off with 20 students that I'm meeting with and . . . you know. And they'll come for maybe one or two sessions; and then after that, I don't see them anymore. Except . . . maybe, maybe if something goes drastically wrong. But even then, I may not hear from them ever. So I started off with almost 20 students this semester. I think it was either 16 or 17, and I'm working with 5 now. Because those 5 are the ones who have come consistently. [. . .] I do wonder sometimes "how effective am I really?"

Moreover, when administrators were asked to describe the number of EWS students who attended the five student success workshops (goal setting, time management, the nine worst habits, strategies for success, and test-taking strategies) conducted through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, administrators collectively stated that the average number of students who attended the workshops was quite low. This is summarized in the following quotations:

I would say maybe 10 [students on average usually show up for the Student Success workshops]. And that's an optimistic average. And, and when I got frustrated with it, I talked to my supervisor and they said "historically that's the case" you know. "Actually, it's good that you have anyone coming, because in the past usually no one came to them." Which . . . my frustration then was, "well then, what's the point of me?" Which you know . . . honestly, it can be a big frustration. But then I have to remember, students that do come, I am making an impact with. So I have to . . . I have to focus on that.

[Usually, there are not a large number of students who attend the student success workshops]. And that's, that's probably the most disappointing thing you know. [Participation for the Student Success workshops] . . . it's voluntary . . . I think . . . I think the most [. . .] [the academic coach/retention specialist in the Freshman Academic Advising Office] ever had; [. . .] maybe like 20. Which we all like . . . we all did hand stands and jump for joy when that happened. But usually 5, 10, students will show up.

Goes Anywhere From Didn't Know, Going to Fail, Shock, Disbelief, to Don't Care.

Regarding students' feelings and reactions in the EWS, to quote an administrator, the feelings and reactions "goes anywhere from oh my I didn't know I'm going to fail, shock, disbelief, to I don't care." This theme, which was collectively identified by administrators interviewed, are described more in-depth below.

In terms of "shock," administrators stated that students were shocked typically when receiving the notification. In terms of "I don't care," administrators stated that students had a blasé attitude about their situation, were apathetic, and treated the notification as if it is just another piece of mail. In terms of "disbelief," administrators stated that students exhibited frustration with themselves because they want to push forward and succeed, were very distressed, and felt a lot of guilt. For example,

[. . .] Well, it really depends on the student. Some, some . . . experience apathy. Because they, they just . . . it's not real to them. Or the impact of it is not real. Or, they don't want to be here. Others experience a lot of guilt, and they have a tendency to beat themselves up for their past. You know . . . those tend to be the students that did really well in high school. Or, had to overcome some kind of . . . some kind of hardship to get to where they are right now. And they feel like they blew it. And they get very frustrated with themselves. Other students . . . are very distressed. But they tend to place the blame externally . . . on a situation or the actions of their professors; or the actions of their classmates, or their family. And, so you have to sort of . . . help them see how their behavior impacted the situation; and perhaps contributed to the way things turned out. Before you can help them take steps to improve. Because, if everything is external, If everything is the rest of the world, then what can you really control. [. . .]

182

One administrator also stated that students sometimes place the blame externally and blame a situation or the actions of others:

> [. . .] Other students . . . are very distressed. But they tend to place the blame externally . . . on a situation or the actions of their professors. Or the actions of their classmates, or their family [. . .]

Examples of Students' Experiences in the EWS.

One administrator with a high level of involvement in the EWS provided concrete examples of students' experiences in the EWS. Examples included: a struggling student perhaps needing to be funneled into the Second-Year Retention program if he/she did not improve by the end of the freshman year; a second student with a GPA below 2.00 who was so motivated that he/she became fed up and beat him/herself up for the missteps. A third student with a GPA below a 2.00, who was failing his/her classes, was very indecisive about his/her major, lacked motivation and drive, responded reactively instead of proactively, was very evasive about what he/she was doing, and relied on his/her parents to push him/her to succeed. A fourth student who was also externally motivated relied on his/her mother to push him/her to be successful, did not show up for appointments, and was resistant to sharing information about what he/she was doing. These students' experiences in the EWS program are described below:

> [. . .] I have one student that I worked with last semester, who's on academic probation at this point. His GPA is a 1 point . . . I think it's a 1.3 or something like that. So he's been coming to [. . .] [Institution X] for a couple years now, but he can't get to the sophomore level because his GPA just . . . you know, he continually struggles. I was sort of working with him last semester for the first time, and he did really well. He got a GPA, that I think it was about a 3.0. And so then he decided, well, I don't really need to work with you anymore. And then just last week, actually it may be this week, contacted me again and said "I'm struggling again. I was wondering if I could come in and work with you again?" So now, he and I are going to be working once a week again for this semester.

My guess is, probably until he's a sophomore. At which time, if his GPA is you know, still not at that 2.0 level, I'm gonna try to see if [. . .] [the Second-Year Retention Program] will take him on. Because he just really needs someone there who's in his corner. So having someone like him . . . where I know that I am helping him and I am making a difference, that . . . it makes it easier.

I have two students who I am working with this semester. One is a young man who is . . . is on freshman warning this semester. So in his first semester he really didn't do very well. And is GPA is below a 2.0. And he and I have been working together throughout the semester, and he is so . . . he's, he's so . . . I, I, wanna say passionate. But I'm not sure that's the right word. But, he's so motivated to be successful, that, that he almost beats himself up too much sometimes for his missteps. And so I have to go in sometimes and say "look at the things you are doing right. Focus on those and don't let the past beat you up." But he's . . . he's improving by leaps and bounds. He doesn't have a single grade below a "C" this semester. Any advice I give him, any ideas we come up with, he immediately takes to heart and puts to practice. And it's really being successful for him. And I, I really haven't had to do even a whole lot of skills training. It's more of just monitoring and encouragement towards certain things. So . . . so, working out a study plan and just saying "well, this doesn't seem to be working with you. How should we modify this?" And then he's really supplying all the ideas.

On the other end of the spectrum, I have a student who . . . is in the exact same predicament as the first one. But she just . . . it, it . . . she really doesn't know what she wants to do. At first she wanted to be a marine biologist. Now she's looking at international hospitality, which is absolutely fine. I want her to find out what really gets her excited and motivated. But, she . . . she just does not have that drive. And her mom calls her every morning to make sure she wakes up, goes to class, and all that stuff. And then she comes to me. And when I ask her about you know "what's going on? What are you trying out?" Everything is very evasive; and it's like pulling teeth trying to get the information out of her. And I, I actually found out through the midterm grades, not through her, because I don't know if she didn't know it, or if she knew it and she just didn't want to say anything, but she's failing the, you know, the one class. And she's probably not doing too great in others, because everything is very reactive, instead of proactive. And, for me, it's, it's, it's . . . the difference between night and day. Between the fact that her motivation is that her parents are really pushing her to be successful. Which is you know, which is better than nothing.

But with this other student, where it's he's doing this for him . . . it, it's just such a drastic difference. [Text combined] [the young man] he's almost to the point where he's going to be sophomore. Probably by fall! He wound up having to withdraw from one course this semester. So he's only going to end up getting 9 credits this semester. But he wants . . . he's, he's at this point starting to get fed up with his situation. He really wants to push forward. So we discussed you know, taking 3 classes in the summer. And by the end of fall he should be sophomore status. If he can really return to the academic standards that he had developed last

semester and maintain them. My concern is because his GPA is so low, once he hits sophomore status, he may still not be in good academic standing. But once . . . once he's a sophomore, I technically don't have any authority to work with him anymore, because I'm restricted to the freshman. But I would hate to see him not have support because he's not a freshman anymore. So if he . . . you know, let's say he's at a 1.8 by the end of the fall, but he's a sophomore, he's still gonna be on probation. And he's got the drive, he just needs the support. It's at that point I would walk him over to [. . .] [the Second-Year Retention program] and say "hey, is there a way that we can get him in the program." Because he's going to do well I think. If he can maintain focus! He just needs someone to help him do that." So . . .

[. . .] My student that is failing her . . . her psychology exam . . . or not her exam, but she's got an exam coming up; but is failing her psychology class. She's just . . . she's apathetic at this point. She's going through the motions of doing it. But she's going through the motions just barely. I, I honestly think the reason she's coming to see me is, because her mom told her she had to. Because her mom was the one who contacted me first before I ever met her. And when she came in to see me, she said "it's because her mom said she had to." I have a feeling her mom is checking in with her to make sure that she's coming in to see me.

　　　But, she had an appointment with me this morning at nine o'clock but didn't show up. So, I'm gonna have to shoot her an email and you know say "what happened?" Especially since she has . . . three midterms and a paper coming up the week after spring break. And she hadn't put together a plan of study for any of these things. She was very resistant to telling me that she even had them. And so, I sensed something was off, and so I prodded her a bit more and then when I did get the full story I said "Ok, what are we . . . Do you have a plan for how we're going to approach this?" "Well, no I was just gonna study the week of." "Oh, well what did you do when you had your first exams?" And so, and so sort of going from there. I, I'm really concern for her, because at this point she's on freshman warning. I believe at the end of the semester she will be on probation. Because the, the importance of that internal motivation just isn't sinking in. She hasn't figured out why she is here yet. And until she does, I don't think that she is going to improve.

Summary.

The following themes were identified during the interviews regarding students' experience in the EWS (setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.): the EWS was not a physical program, students were not surveyed to determine their experiences in the EWS, alerted students did not go into the office for assistance (or respond to the notification

letter), students' participation was low; and students' feelings and reactions in the EWS "goes anywhere from oh my I didn't know I'm going to fail, shock, disbelief, to I don't care." Concrete examples of four students' experiences in the EWS were also provided by the administrator with the highest level of involvement with EWS.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 3.

Administrators pointed out numerous students' retention issues or deficits (academic and non-academic). Many of which, cut across retention issues topics; and all of which, pointed to reasons why students were not doing well academically and not being successful. Students were collectively blamed for their own failure, as administrators stated that students were well informed of services and it was the students' responsibility. Administrators stated that many of these issues or deficits resulted from lack of development in high school. An administrator also stated that maybe the reason for students' lack of success/failure was not solely that of the student and could have been because of parent involvement/lack of involvement, poor development through the K-12 system, the institution, etc. Another administrator stated that if institutions admitted these students, then they had a responsibility to provide them with the help they needed to persist and be successful. Lack of/poor skills (e.g., math and English), among others, were widely identified in the retention issues topics as learning and development needs, which administrators stated the institution did not have remediation programs in place to address. Though remediation programs were lacking at the institution, there was mention of non-remediation approaches for math and English. In terms of students' experiences in the EWS (setting, feelings, reactions, etc.), administrators stated that the EWS program was not a physical program where students had to respond, and it was not

186

designed to address students' issues or deficits unless students actually visited the office; which many students who were alerted, did not go into the office for assistance or attend the student success workshops. Also, students were not surveyed to determine their feelings, reactions, etc., of (and in) the program. Administrators cited these as weaknesses in the program. Concrete examples of four students' experiences in the EWS were provided by the administrator with the direct (and high) level of contact with the EWS students. Students' feelings and reactions in the EWS program often reflected shock, disbelief, and/or an "I don't care" attitude.

The next section of the dissertation will explore the remaining two research questions: (a) Do EWS meaningfully address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes, consistent with research evidence? and (b) Do EWS meaningfully address students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills, consistent with research evidence?

Students' Psychotherapy/Psycho-Educational Processes and
Students' Executive Skills Functions

There was a lack of clarity surrounding who was truly responsible for student retention through EWS. Additionally, services/critical departments such as EWS do not work together sufficiently to share student information to benefit students. An administrator also stated, "I don't think the [EWS] program is designed to address the issues, unless the students come to us," which was echoed by many administrators. In addition, administrators collectively stated that the EWS was not a physical program,

187

students' participation in the program was low, and because participation in the program was voluntary, many students did not respond to the notifications.

The next sections of the dissertation will explore if the EWS was designed with Perez's (1998) supporting, connecting, and transforming strategies in mind to transform EWS students and the institution to achieve Hossler and Bean's paradigms.

Psychotherapy/Psycho-Educational Processes

The fourth research question explored if EWS at the institution meaningfully addressed students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes consistent with research evidence. Numerous student retention issues and deficits (academic and psychological/social) were identified by administrators, many of which may have been catalysts for (and required) psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes. Administrators stated too that they were not provided with formal training to work with students with retention issues or deficits and normative assessment measures were not used at an individual level to identify and assess students' individual retention issues or deficits. Two administrators stated however that they had formal education in counseling:

> Well, I have two Master's degrees (one in counseling and one in higher education).   So, I think my education plus my years of experience have brought me to the place where I can help them . . . figure out . . . where their behavior will lead them.

> The training that I've gotten has, has largely been . . . through my academic training. In counseling, I learned a lot about how to work with students. Not necessarily work with students, but work with individuals. How to get them to a certain place. How to evaluate a certain situation. In terms of the academic skills training . . . I got a lot of that in my [. . .] tutoring training [when I worked for the Second-Year Retention Program]. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Four themes emerged from the interviews regarding students'
psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes to address students' retention issues or
deficits. They pertained to the one-on-one retention counseling through the Retention
Office, Counseling Center, Health and Wellness Center and similar services, the
Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, and one-on-one sessions with the
retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office.

One-On-One Retention Counseling Through the Retention Office.

Administrators in the Retention Office stated that they were not psychological
counselors or academic advisors, but they did work with all students in a one-on-one
setting doing "kind of like retention counseling." It was noted in the interviews that the
Retention Office did not know when EWS students visited the Retention Office for
assistance because EWS students are not differentiated from the general student
population.

*Counseling and Psychological Services Center, University Clinic, Disability
Services, and Health and Wellness.* As noted earlier in the dissertation, administrators
collectively stated that services were offered to assist all students/the general student
population along the lines of the emotional, mental, and physical avenues. In addition to
the one-on-one retention counseling conducted through the Retention Office,
administrators also mentioned the following services: the Counseling Center, the
University Clinic, and one-on-one sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach
in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, Disability Services, and Health and
Wellness.

Administrators collectively stated that students with retention issues or deficits were referred to the Counseling Center. All of the services just described (with the exception of one-on-one sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office) were identified as not being a coordinated function of the EWS. When administrators (within Freshman Academic Advising, Multicultural Affairs, and Retention Offices) were questioned about collaboration between their service/department and the Counseling Center and the Health and Wellness Center, administrators collectively stated that a relationship did not exist with counseling beyond the offices referring (or walking) students to the Counseling Center. This theme is summarized in the quotations below:

> There isn't [a relationship with the Counseling Center in terms of feedback]. [The] Counseling [Center] can't even tell us if their student goes to their center. So if we refer students to counseling, and many times we will walk them to the Counseling Center, but we wouldn't even know if they necessarily met with the Counseling Center. Because that's part of their privacy. [. . .]

> Honestly they [Counseling Center] don't provide anything to me [in Freshman Academic Advising]. I, you know . . . and, and in terms of . . . providing things to them, other than referrals, they don't ask anything of me. [. . .]

> They [EWS] work with the Counseling Center as a referral. [. . .] The Counseling Center is used as a resource. There's no mandated counseling. It is a resource tool.

Assess Students' Issues or Deficits through the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory. In terms of assessing students' issues/deficits in the EWS program, assessment measures were not mentioned in relation to the early alert and the mid-term deficiency reporting systems. In terms of the freshman warning system, students who were placed on freshman warning (whose GPA falls below a 2.00) were required to complete a 45 minute Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory to

assess their issues/deficits and pass the quiz at the end of the inventory with an 80 (or

85%) and go into the Freshman Academic Advising Office to resume registration and

academic activities. Administrators collectively stated that the inventory was a home-

grown inventory and "is probably the closest thing to assessing where students stand on .

. . skills that I can think of at the moment." Administrators who worked very closely with

the EWS (and other administrators interviewed), stated that they did not receive the

inventory data/results from the department (e.g., get a printout of students' weakest areas)

and did not utilize the data regarding students' issues/deficits when working one-on-one

with students. An administrator also stated that when students went into the Freshman

Academic Advising Services Office to meet with the retention specialist/academic coach,

the retention specialist/academic coach had the student direct the session by talking about

his/her situation:

> I actually don't know what they do with the [. . .] [Academic Recovery Self-Assessment] inventory data. I didn't create it, and I don't really manage it. [. . .] Whether they take that for diagnostic or statistical analysis, I honestly couldn't say. For me it's more of, I just need to know who these students are so that I can get them in my office to work with them. [Text combined] No [I don't get a print out of what their weakest areas are]! I, I try to . . . I try to let the student direct it and the student tell me what's going on. [. . .]

> Administrators also collectively stated, as identified in the following

administrator's comment, that:

> [. . .] Because of the volume, again, we can't have them sit down with every student. In an ideal world that would happen. We don't live there! So, this [the strategies for Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory] is kind of their reminder of what is appropriate academic habits.

One-On-One Sessions with the Retention Specialist/Academic Coach in the

Freshman Academic Advising Services Office. Outside of the formal strategies for the

Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory just described, which was not utilized

during individual one-on-one sessions with the students, it was noted that assessment

measures to identify students' issues or deficits tended to be "informal." For example, in

addition to students receiving a freshman warning, administrators stated that students

who received two or more grade reports below a "C-" through the mid-term grade

reporting system were invited to go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services

Office to speak with the retention specialist/academic coach about remedying their

situation. When students seek the retention specialist/academic coach from the Freshman

Academic Advising Services Office, it included academic contracts and a series of skills

development workshops conducted through the Freshman Academic Advising Services

Office.

   Document.

   Documents from the Counseling and Psychological Services Center, Student

Health and Wellness Services websites, brochures, and the undergraduate course catalog,

and the Health and Wellness Services guide were acquired to explore the services

identified during the interviews along the lines of the emotional, mental, and physical

avenues at the institution. These avenues are referred to as noncognitive factors/skills.

The documents were also acquired to explore whether the EWS was meaningfully

addressing students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes through these services,

consistent with research evidence. The documents identified providing individual or

group counseling (personal, academic, psychological, and/or financial), life skills

counseling and interpersonal and wellness counseling through workshops/seminars as the Counseling and Psychological Services Center's main objectives. The documents also stated that trained professionals were available to "assist students with a wide range of personal concerns and problems," personal difficulties, and learning problems, among others, that "interfere with their ability to benefit from academic and extracurricular experiences." Additionally, the documents showed evidence of encouraging students' personal responsibility and encouraging students to seek counseling if they were frequently experiencing issues (e.g., fatigue, sleep deprivation, and illness, college adjustment issues, difficulty resolving problems). Further, the Counseling Center offered a guide to help faculty/staff identify students in distress (and their areas of distress), communicate effectively with these students, intervene and assist these students, and refer these students to appropriate services (e.g., Counseling, Health and Wellness Services, Disabilities Service).

Health and Wellness Services' documents stated that the aim of the service/department was to help students succeed both academically and professionally by encouraging students "to take care of themselves physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually." Health and Wellness Services' documents also emphasized that the Health and Wellness Services Center, in collaboration with the Counseling Center, provided "psycho-educational and wellness programs on a variety of mental health topics" such as stress management, enhancing self-esteem, time management and organization, depression, identifying cognitive strengths, maintaining academic and social balance, test-taking skills, study skills, and identifying and developing coping skills, among others, to "enhance students' capacity for reaching academic and personal

goals." An administrator during his/her interview stated in terms of the services offered

through the Counseling Center and the Health and Wellness Services Center services,

that "we also do those in the Counseling Center . . . as well. We know high time for

students, stressful times. We do workshops - - how to deal with stress, time management.

All that kind of stuff." Additionally, the documents stressed that the two services worked

with each other and provided "seminars alerting the College community to the early

warning signs, recognition and follow-up of disruptive or troubled students." The

documents also stated that "neuropsychological evaluations*, provided through these*

services, are designed to enhance academic performance and retention [italics added]."

Summary.

Numerous student issues and deficits (academic and psychological/social) were

identified by administrators during the interviews and documents, many of which may

require psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes. Administrators collectively stated

that they were not provided with formal training through the Freshman Academic

Advising Services Office and the Retention Office to work with EWS students.

Documents also stated that services delivered through the Counseling Center, Health and

Wellness Center, University Clinic, and/or Disabilities Service Center included:

supporting personal development, having trained psychotherapy staff to assist students

with their issues or deficits through psychotherapy/psycho-educational and/or wellness

through individual or group counseling, workshops, or seminars, advising students to

seek out counseling if they were experiencing issues or deficits, and providing faculty

and staff with a guide to identify, effectively communicate with, intervene, and refer to

appropriate services students who were in distress. The above mentioned services, however, were not coordinated functions of EWS.

Themes for addressing students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes, reflected the following topics: one-on-one counseling through the Retention Office; Counseling and Psychological Services, Health and Wellness, University Clinic, and Disability Services Centers; Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory; and one-on-one sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office. Administrators in the Retention Office stated that they were not psychological counselors or academic advisors, but they did work with the students in a one-on-one setting doing "kind of like retention counseling." It was noted in the interviews that the Retention Office did not distinguish EWS students from the general student population when students went into the office for one-on-one sessions and discussions during these sessions centered more on academic retention issues or deficits.

Administrators also collectively stated that students with retention issues or deficits were referred to the Counseling and Psychological Services Center. Documents also demonstrated that the Health and Wellness Center and the Counseling Center worked collaboratively to provide "seminars alerting the College community to the early warning signs, recognition and follow-up of disruptive or troubled students." A relationship did not exist between EWS and Counseling Center, Health and Wellness Center, and similar services beyond referring students to these services.

In terms of the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, students who did not pass it after two attempts were required to go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office to see the retention specialist/academic coach. However, administrators

195

stated that they did not receive the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory

results from the office and thus did not utilize the data when working one-on-one with

students to resolve their issues. In addition, outside of the formal strategies for the

Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, assessment measures to identify

students' retention issues or deficits were "informal."

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 4.

In addition to services/critical departments not working together to share student

information to benefit students, it was also noted that: (a) administrators were not

provided with formal training to work with students' retention issues or deficits, (b) the

program was not a physical program in that students were not required to go into the

office for assistance, (c) normative assessment measures were not used at an individual-

level to identify and assess students' individual retention issues or deficits, and assessing

students' individual issues or deficits tended to be informal, (d) and students' issues or

deficits were not tracked and monitored. Additionally, even though administrators

identified numerous psychological/social retention issues or deficits, there was a lack of

psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes in place to assist students along those lines.

For example: (a) EWS students were not differentiated from the general student

population when they went into the Retention Office for assistance, (b) the Counseling

Center, Health and Wellness Center and similar services were not coordinated functions

of the EWS, and a relationship did not exist between EWS and those services beyond

referring students to the services, (c) the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory

data was not required of all EWS students, was not utilized when working one-on-one

with students, and was mainly centered on "academic" issues or deficits; and (d)

students' one-on-one sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office were more academically related (e.g., academic contracts, recommendations to academic skills development workshops).

Thus, the data show that addressing students' psychological/social/behavioral retention issues or deficits through counseling was not supported because EWS at the institution did not meaningfully address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes consistent with research evidence.

Executive Skills Function

Executive skills functioning is defined as a set of interacting components (cognitive and noncognitive) responsible for in-depth, purposive, and self-regulated behavior (Peterson et al., 2006; Parker & Boutelle, 2009; Rachal et al., 2007). These separate, but interacting components consist of working memory, response inhibitory control (personality/emotional variables and perception and correction of error when needed (Cooper, 2009; Marcovitch & Zelago, 2009; Meltzer, 2007; Thorell et al., 2009). A deficiency in any of the three components suggests the need for interventions that focus on developing executive function, especially because each has been associated with academic success (Rachal et al., 2007).

The fifth research question explored if EWS at the institution meaningfully address students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills consistent with research evidence.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Numerous academic retention issues or deficits were noted during this research. An administrator stated that students' academic issues or deficits were addressed through "ameliorative strategies," which was also a term used in the institution's documents. The three themes of ameliorative strategies included: Retention Office's services and the Writing Center/Lab, sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, and additional ameliorative strategies (e.g., tutoring, math lab, SI, academic workshops, tips through the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment inventory, etc.)

Ameliorative Strategies: Retention Office's Services and the Writing Center/Lab.

In terms of the first theme, administrators collectively stated that services/ameliorative strategies were offered through the Retention Office and the Writing Center/Lab to assist students with academic retention issues. Administrators collectively stated that the Retention Office's primary role was to develop "strategies and programs . . . to . . . help students persist . . . and help to retain students here at the university." According to administrators in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, the role of the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office was to provide the warning, advice, "and what not. But in terms of the programs [supplemental instruction, group or private tutoring, etc.] and what not, technically that, that should be, primarily be the [. . .] [Retention] Office's . . . domain."

198

Administrators collectively stated that academic avenues such as academic skill building, service learning opportunities and tutoring were offered at the institution for those who wanted to take advantage of the services and/or resources. Administrators also collectively stated that SI sessions (which are guided sessions led by students who have successfully passed the course and are trained to lead study/tutor/review sessions for the course), Math Lab, and Writing Center/Lab (which assists students with grade "A" assignments or non-grade "A" assignments, proof reading papers, paper critique, and honing of writing skills, etc.) were also available at the institution for all students. These academic avenues/ameliorative strategies (with the exception of the Writing Center/Lab) are housed in the Retention Office. An example of the academic avenues/ameliorative strategies is presented below:

> [. . .] I refer students to them [Retention Office]. Because I see them as a resource for my students. Especially with the [. . .] SI services and the . . . tutoring services. So you know, my job isn't just to teach . . . or, or to guide them on how to be a better note-taker. Or how to improve in algebra class. But also to help them find resources for improvement. Because I try to make sure that students understand that I'm not in the driver's seat in this relationship. I'm in the passenger seat. And, I'm just sort of walking alongside them wherever they want to go. And so if they tell me that you know, they're really struggling in their English class or something like that, I might talk to them about "well ok, how can you manage your time better so that . . . you know, "so the papers get done at a better pace." But then in terms of the quality of those papers, I'm not really the person to . . . talk to, because I'm not a professional English major or anything like that. So, I'll refer them to the Writing Center. [. . .]

Administrators stated that the aforementioned ameliorative strategies offered through the Retention Office (tutoring, SI, Math Center/Lab) and the Writing Lab were utilized to improve in any areas (e.g., time management; note-taking, study, and test-taking skills; learning styles) identified on the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory or the Multicultural Affairs Self-Assessment Inventory. Administrators also

collectively noted that students who received early alert and/or mid-term grade report(s) through the EWS programs were frequently referred to services housed in the Retention Office to improve skills. Though EWS was meeting students' executive skills functions needs beyond basic time management and organization through referrals to the Retention Office (and academic workshops conducted through the Freshman Academic Advising Services' Office), the Retention Office did not differentiate EWS students from the general student population, and therefore were not aware when EWS students visited the office for assistance. Additionally, EWS students' issues/deficits were not assessed, tracked, and monitored, and EWS students' information was not collected and shared with other departments. As mentioned earlier, this service/department and other services/departments did not work together to share EWS students' information to benefit students.

Ameliorative Strategy: Sessions with the Retention Specialist/Academic Coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office.

In terms of the second theme, administrators in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office collectively stated that there was a retention specialist/academic coach in the office to assist students. An administrator's response, which describes this ameliorative strategy, is summarized below:

> Well, what I try to do first [when they come into the Freshman Academic
> Advising Services Office for assistance with their issue] is . . . I, I, first explain to
> them what I do. I try to set up the expectations for our time together. To let them
> know that I'm not going to be . . . I'm not going to be leading our interactions.
> But, that I'm simply, here as a resource to them. And, a support to them. And
> then what I try to do in that first meeting is, identify what they consider their
> greatest weaknesses to be. In the areas that they would like to improve. I also try
> to . . . get them to . . . sort of piece apart the previous semester or the previous
> situation, to try to find out what went wrong and what was in their control, and

what was not in their control. And so then from there we set up goals for our relationship and the semester. Where . . . you know, if they say time management is their biggest problem, then I say "ok. Well then how, then . . . What would you like to learn about time management?" So then over the next few weeks we go over breaking apart assignments using a planner. Setting up study times. Things like that. And then as things, things come up . . . we address them . . . in session.

Additional Ameliorative Strategies.

In terms of the third theme, administrators stated that to address students'

academic issues or deficits, students were given "ameliorative strategies and tips" to

remediate the situation and turn themselves around. In addition to the above mentioned

ameliorative strategies (attending SI, tutoring, Writing lab, Math lab, and sessions with

the retention specialist/academic coach) to address students' academic issues or deficits,

administrators also listed the following additional ameliorative strategies (and

subthemes): strategies and tips at the end of the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment

inventory, workshops geared toward skill development, speaking with their professors,

discussing the situation one-on-one with an administrator, and taking the voluntary SLS

course, among others. The workshops and Academic Recovery Self-Assessment

inventory are summarized in the following administrators' responses:

> [. . .] Each one [student success workshop] has a specific topic. One, one workshop . . . focuses on you know . . . the dangers of bad habits and . . . college. Like the, the . . . ten . . . the nine deadliest habits of college students. So, like not attending class, sitting in the back of the class, pulling all-nighters. Stuff like that. And there's time management. There's another one on academic goal setting. Another one on studying . . . setting up a study plan. There's another one on . . . note-taking . . . test-taking and how to approach different types of questions. Things like that. [. . .]

> [. . .] The [academic self-assessment] inventory covers 5 areas (time management, critical thinking, note-taking, study skills, and there's one other . . . there's one other . . . test-taking strategies). And so, the students are put through a series of . . . They answer a series of questions. Depending on their answers they may get certain responses. [. . .] So, the inventory it's a self-assessment. Again,

it's designed to help students pinpoint areas where they may not be maximizing their . . . the resources. Or they may not be doing all that they could do to be successful in certain area. And so the inventory then gives them some strategies, gives them some tips on things they might do to improve. [. . .]

An administrator noted that the SLS course credit had increased from 1 to 2 credits to include more topics. Administrators stated that the SLS course included topics such as learning about college culture/life, learning to better transition into the university, and learning about (and getting connected to) services/resources and developing/enhancing skills ([e.g., time management, test-taking, listening and note-taking, academic goal setting, learning strategies and styles, short-and long-term planning, etc.]). These topics, among others (self-discipline, managing freedom, remaining positive when bad things occur, devising and carrying out improvement plans, etc.) were also listed as part of the SLS new instructor workshop training manual.

Ameliorative strategies that were identified related to workshops included: student success workshops which are centered on skill development and immediate recovery workshops after mid-term grades were posted. Administrators stated that the student success workshops addressed topics such as the dangers of bad habits and college, the nine deadliest habits of college students (e.g., "not attending class, sitting in the back of class, pulling all-nighters"), academic goal-setting, setting up a study plan, and how to approach different types of questions. An administrator also highlighted a series of three immediate recovery workshops being offered for the first time that focused on (a) how to read a text book, (b) how to alter one's note-taking style, and (c) another topic area that the administrator could not recall.

Document.

In terms of the Writing Center/Lab, documents acquired for the dissertation (e.g., website, brochure, and flyer) identified the mission of the Writing Center/Lab as to assist students with the writing process (e.g., brainstorming, drafting, revising, and developing reading and writing strategies), so they become more "reflective readers and sufficient crafters of their written work." The documents stated that nationally certified graduate assistance and peer consultants assisted students through individualized 30 to 60 minute sessions. Documentation also suggested that the Writing Center/Lab hosted workshops that focused on reviewing basic writing approaches such as grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure. Workshops were "guided instruction beyond the classroom" and "guided practice and application of lessons," which were held throughout the semester and lasted for one hour. Each workshop session was limited to less than 10 students, important to note considering the large number of EWS students at the institution.

In terms of the "ameliorative strategies and tips" mentioned during the interviews, the following documents acquired through various departments/services (and their websites) presented evidence of the ameliorative strategies: the SLS course description, course syllabus, mission/statement of purpose, and new instructor workshop manual, Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, Multicultural Affairs program's brochures, and Student Success program's brochure and survey evaluation results. In addition to ameliorative strategies, which will be described below, tips that are listed on the inventory documents included contacting relevant services/departments. For example, when students' responses indicated poor study habits on the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, in addition to specific tips to begin turning things

around (e.g., making studying a routine), students were told that "help is readily available through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office" and were recommended to schedule "a session with an academic advisor to get some coaching tips for improving [. . .] *their* study techniques [italics added]," among other things. Even if the inventory results indicated excellent, good (but there is room for improvement), or poor, the same tips and recommendations were listed for each response.

Students were also encouraged through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office's website to speak with an advisor if they "feel overwhelmed or think [. . .] *they are* failing a class [italics added]," or to contact their advisors to discuss "personal concerns and plans at greater length." The website also provides students with information regarding the freshman warning status and information on how to evaluate their situation, improve their GPA, and get off freshman warning. Students were told to take steps early and not wait until mid-semester/end of second-semester to take action and were reminded that failure to improve their GPA would result in a movement from warning to probation status. Students were also directed to the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory listed on the website to determine what contributed to their freshman warning status/situation (e.g., adjusting to college life, poor study skills).

Summary.

Numerous student issues and deficits (academic and psychological/social) were identified by administrators during the interviews and documents, many of which may have required executive skills processes beyond basic time management and organizational skills.

The following three themes emerged for executive skills functioning beyond basic time management and organizational skills, consistent with research evidence: Retention Office's Services and the Writing Lab/Center, sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, and additional ameliorative strategies. Administrators stated that to address EWS students' academic retention issues or deficits, services/ameliorative strategies are offered through the Retention Office and the Writing Center/Lab. Administrators stated that the role of the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office was to provide the warning/advice; the primary role of the Writing Center/Lab was to provide writing assistance; and, the primary role of the Retention Office was to develop strategies and programs (e.g., supplemental instruction, group or private tutoring) to help retain students and help students persist. Documents identified the mission of the Writing Center/Lab as a center to assist students with the writing process. The ameliorative strategies offered through these services were also utilized to improve in any areas identified on the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory.

Administrators stated that students who received mid-term grade reports below a "C-" through the midterm grade reporting system were invited to contact the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office to discuss their progress and are referred to resources/services (e.g., the Retention Office, Writing Center/Lab) to remedy the situation. The warning, probation, and suspension students who were reported were required to complete an Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory that was available through the Freshman Academic Advising Services Offices' website, as well as go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office to have their hold removed, or

meet with the retention specialist/academic coach if they did not successfully pass the inventory quiz after several attempts. The Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory results were not shared with administrators (e.g., the retention specialist/academic coach, Retention Office staff), and thus administrators did not use the results when meeting with students.

In addition to the above mentioned ameliorative strategies (e.g., attending SI, tutoring, Writing lab, Math lab, and sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach), administrators also mentioned the following additional ameliorative strategies and tips: tips listed on the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory, workshops geared toward skill development. Moreover, additional ameliorative strategies and tips such as speaking with their professors, discussing the situation one-on-one with an administrator (e.g., retention specialist/success coach), and taking the voluntary SLS course were also mentioned.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 5.

It was noted that formal training to work with EWS students' retention issues or deficits was lacking; EWS students' academic retention issues or deficits were not formally assessed through individual-level assessment measures, tracked, and monitored; and services/critical departments did not share student information to benefit students. "Ameliorative" strategies were in place to address students' retention issues or deficits: (a) Retention Office's services (e.g., tutoring, SI, math lab) and the Writing Center/Lab, (b) sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office (e.g., academic contracts, skills development workshops), and (c) additional ameliorative strategies (e.g., speaking with professors, Academic Recovery

206

Self-Assessment inventory tips, taking the voluntary SLS, skills development/student success workshops, etc.).

Thus, the data show that in addition to time management and organizational skills, other academic retention issues or deficits were supported in that EWS meaningfully address students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills consistent with research evidence.

Institution Y

What Institutions are doing to Improve Retention in EWS

The first research question explored what institutions were doing to improve

retention in Early Warning Systems (EWS) consistent with Hossler and Bean's

paradigms and Perez's retention strategies. To address this question, administrators at

Institution Y were asked to describe the services offered frequently at their institution,

their philosophy of retention (the theories they espouse to/use) and how it was applied in

the program, the training they had received regarding EWS and working with at-risk

students having difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, and their

personal experience in the EWS.

Services Offered Frequently at the Institution

An administrator stated that the "institutional retention goal is 80%. And

currently we're at about 72%." In terms of the current retention rate, a second

administrator stated "oh gosh . . . 71%." A third administrator stated "I think it's around .

. . high 70's, low 80's." Several administrators stated that since last year, the institution's

retention rate had increased approximately 7%.

The retention rate raises critical questions about the importance of retention and

institutional stability; particularly, the economic, learning, and development paradigms,

expressed by Hossler and Bean in the literature review in Chapter 2. Borland (2001-

2002) stated in terms of Hossler and Bean's paradigms, that without focus on the

retention as economic paradigm to maintain enrollment, "the reaching of the 'moral'

Learning and Development purposes would, for many institutions, be impossible" (p. 374).

Administrators' Interview Responses: Services Offered Frequently at the Institution.

Many services being offered frequently at the institution were housed in the Student Success Center (e.g., early alert system, tutoring, disability services, academic coaching, first year experience, etc.). Services not housed in the Student Success Center (e.g., spiritual services, Health and Wellness Center, Writing Center, and Psychological Counseling Center) were also mentioned as services offered frequently at the institution. Additional services (student activities, orientation, etc.) were also mentioned. Examples of responses regarding services offered frequently at the institution are noted below:

> [. . .] Tutoring is one of the ones that is very well utilized. [. . .] Counseling services is another one that I think targets the whole population. Student activities - - opportunities to connect with others is a huge, huge concern. [. . .] On our campus, because we are a Christian school, I think one of the services you can consider is spiritual services. And that manifest in a number of different ways. [. . .] I think in regards to students at risk, the service that is most relevant to them is probably our early alert system. [. . .] And then, there is a lot of things that fall under that. [. . .]

> [. . .] Every semester, but primarily the fall, we have a series of workshops (academic enrichment workshops) that we think . . . can help . . . enhance . . . the learning experience of students here at the college. [. . .] We have tutoring in various subject areas [. . .]. We also have something that's called academic coaching. [. . .] We also get the early alerts [. . .] [which is] an online system, where a professor or whomever is going to make the report or bring it [issues or deficits] to our attention. [. . .]

Documents.

Documents such as the Dean of Students' Welcome Letter acquired through the Student Handbook and the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Catalog suggested that the division

of Student Development and Services supported the university's academic mission by providing services and activities that fostered student learning inside and outside the classroom, and helping students "grow and develop intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, socially and culturally within the context of a Christian community."

Summary.

When asked about the services offered frequently at their institution, numerous services emerged as approaches used by the institution to improve retention. Administrators collectively identified as major themes: the early alert system/program, tutoring/mentoring, counseling (Health and Wellness and/or Counseling and Psychological Services counseling when students struggled academically, socially, spiritually, and/or mentally), Writing Center (which was run by the English department), academic coaching (which targeted students who were not doing well academically and/or who have disabilities, etc.), academic support and disabilities, academic enrichment workshops, Bridges program (for provisionally accepted students), First Year Experience courses/program, transfer advising, academic enrichment workshops (e.g., time management skills, knowing your learning styles, study skills), and spiritual (e.g., spiritual help and counseling; combining faith and learning).

Though not mentioned collectively as services offered frequently at the institution, other services also emerged: student activities (opportunities for students to connect with each other), predictive modeling, remedial classes, academic advising/advisors, committees (e.g., Students Concerns Committee and Retention Committee), admissions, career services, and financial aid, orientation, and pre-registration activities prior to beginning in the fall semester.

As per documents analyzed, many of the services mentioned above were housed in the Student Success Center; and all of the services mentioned above were classified under the division of Student Development and Services and were designed to foster academic, psychological, and social learning and development inside and outside the classroom.

Early Warning System

Four of six administrators acknowledged EWS as a frequently offered service without prompting. As one administrator declared, "for alerting the different members of this committee to issues, we have an early alert system where anyone can submit an early alert for students, where they can express their concerns." When the remaining two administrators were prompted with a probing question regarding EWS as a service offered frequently at the institution, one of the two administrators elaborated on EWS as a service.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Early Alert System.

Current Early Alert System.

In terms of the early alert system theme, administrators collectively described the EWS as an online web-based system that was available for anyone who would like to report concerns about students. An administrator stated that when the early alert system was first developed, however, the early alert form was paper, which was managed by the current director of the Student Success Center. Shortly after the development of the early alert form, a Students Concerns Committee was implemented to "be the outworkings of the early alert system." Two years after the paper form appeared it became a web-based

form "so that it would be more accessible to everybody." Administrators collectively

stated that the current early alert system was located online, very simple to use, and could

be used by anyone. An administrator described the current early alert system subtheme

as "an online system, where a professor or whomever is going to make the report or bring

it to our attention. They can go online, click . . . the link. It will generate a form."

New (Future) Early Alert System.

Administrators collectively stated that a new early alert software system (the

Pharos 360 software system) would be implemented, which "will be very user friendly"

and "[have] capabilities that the current system does not have." When asked a probing

question regarding the new system's capabilities, an administrator stated that with the

"new program you can actually request correspondence and where it is at every given

step, and what action steps have been taken." Examples of administrators' responses

regarding the new early alert system (Pharos 360 software system) subtheme are

presented below:

> [. . .] We're implementing a new database. A new software program. That if I
> put in an early alert, I send it to Student Success [Center], I can select a box that
> says "please provide me updates on this student." [. . .] But this new program
> you can actually request correspondence and where it is at every given step, and
> what action steps have been taken. So this new system that we're developing
> here, relatively shortly, will have all of that. [. . .]
>
> We have . . . not a lot [of students alerted through the current early alert system].
> I mean relative to the total population, not a large number. Maybe 2 or 3%. You
> know, it's those students who aren't alerted that's the biggest concern. And that's
> where I feel we can do better on the retention level. That's why this new program
> that we're gonna offer will be more user friendly. And, perhaps allow for every . .
> . other departments to utilize it further.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Midterm Deficiency Grade Reporting System, Predictive Reporting Through Pre-Matriculation Data, and the Bridges Mentoring Program.

In addition to the early alert program as EWS for first year students, other EWS subthemes also emerged during the interviews. They included the following: midterm deficiency grade reporting system (which is orchestrated through the Registrar's Office), predictive reporting through pre-matriculation data, and the Bridges mentoring program. Administrators collectively stated that the early alert program/system, the predictive reporting through pre-matriculation data program, and the Bridges mentoring program were all housed within the Student Success Center. The Student Success Center is described during the interviews as "the student development side" and:

> The central hub that all of the other outside departments [e.g., deans; Registrar, Health and Wellness, Residence Life, and Admissions Offices, among others] go to, to bring . . . all of the issues to someone's attention. And then from there, the appropriate . . . Like I said, the appropriate people. You know, either the deans or the Registrar's Office, or Health and Wellness, or Res Life, or Admissions, or you know. All of the other departments are alerted. [. . .]

Midterm Deficiency Grade Reporting System. In terms of the subtheme for midterm deficiency grade reporting system, administrators collectively stated that faculty members who noted a student was earning a grade below a "C-" in his/her course can report the deficiency through the midterm deficiency grade reporting system. As one administrator stated, "it's in the faculty handbook that they [faculty] are required to submit deficiency reports." An administrator stated while discussing faculty participation in the early alert program that "it's not mandatory [that faculty submit deficiency reports] . . . because you know, it . . . it is very difficult to mandate things of professors. But the

concerned professors will bring it to our attention. We ask them . . . we encourage them

to do so. Some of them very much . . . some of them will mention to me in passing."

Predictive Reporting Through Pre-Matriculation Data and the Bridges

Mentoring Program. In terms of the predictive reporting through pre-matriculation data

program (also referred to as predictive modeling, performa, or power alert) and the

Bridges mentoring program subthemes, both programs take into consideration students'

prior background (e.g., standardized test scores, high school GPA, demographics, etc.,

that may place them at risk) when admitting students into the institution. Once enrolled,

these students continue in the programs and both programs continue to identify and assist

their respective students at the first sign of academic struggle. The Bridges program

provided provisionally admitted students (students admitted with low ACT or SAT in

math and/or English) with remedial classes "during their first year to get them kind of

caught up." Administrators also stated that the predictive reporting through pre-

matriculation data program "ranks students in terms of likelihood to stay" and uncovered

those who were more likely to leave to "target them before they even get on the early

alert system."

Document.

In terms of the new early alert system's capabilities (the Pharos 360 software

system), documentation (an overview of the Pharos 360 software system) acquired

through the Student Success Center stated that the Pharos 360 software system was a

comprehensive/holistic early alert approach to identify students who were struggling and

inform the frontline of support services and provide students with (and enhance) those

support services, resources, and interventions. As per the document, the system does this

by connecting support services to the frontline (and each other) to build new partnerships, practices, and interventions, efficiently managing student records (e.g., case notes, contracts, progress, and referral), allowing immediate access to student and case management information and monitoring students. It also contained analytic and reporting features to easily measure student and program successes that could be easily integrated with an institution's current student information system, with limited maintenance cost concerns.

Summary.

The majority of the administrators identified EWS as a service offered frequently at the institution without prompting. Administrators collectively stated that there was an online early alert system where anyone (faculty, staff, parents, and students) could report concerns about students. Administrators also collectively stated that a new early alert software system (Pharos 360 software system) that was user-friendly and possessing numerous capabilities would soon be implemented to replace the current online early alert system.

Administrators also identified as the midterm deficiency grade reporting system (which is orchestrated through the Registrar's Office) as part of EWS. Also identified as EWS were predictive reporting through pre-matriculation data and a Bridges mentoring program. Students admitted in these programs continued in the programs once enrolled. Students in these programs were also provided with remedial classes "during their first year to get them kind of caught up." Additionally, administrators stated that the early alert system/program, the predictive reporting through pre-matriculation data program, and the Bridges mentoring program were all housed within the Student Success Center.

To further address the first research question regarding what institutions were doing to improve retention in EWS, the next section of the dissertation will explore themes associated with administrators' philosophy of retention (the theories they espouse to/use) and how it was applied in the program, the training they received regarding EWS and working with at-risk students having difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, and their personal experience in the EWS.

Administrators' Knowledge of (and view of) Programming

It was important to examine the extant research related to improving student retention and if it guided the administrators' programming. For example, what did administrators actually know about the research and what they were implementing? Were they actually doing what they claimed? And what were the reasons they gave for not implementing interventions that research deemed necessary? To address these questions, the next section of the dissertation focuses on administrators' knowledge and view of programming.

Administrators' Philosophy/Theories

Administrators' Interview Responses: Philosophy/Theories Espoused/Used.

An administrator responded that, "retention is really what we do" in the Student Success Center and it is about helping students manage expectations and equipping students for success through support services/resources. Other administrators' responses coincided with one or more of the areas just mentioned. Examples of administrators' responses regarding the philosophy/theories they espoused /used related to retention are listed below:

Ok. I think retention has a lot to do with . . . giving them the academic support that students need. If they come here and they feel like that . . . they can't perform well. And if there were no services [e.g., peer tutoring], that would be really hard. [. . .] And then the other thing that . . . the biggest thing with retention is, giving them the financial resources [. . .]

Really I mean . . . I think the best way to retain students is to . . . just constantly be in communication with them. Like what we are . . . We provide all the different academic services and spiritual services. [. . .] We just do everything we can to respond to their needs and . . . and help them in any way . . . we can. And that . . . that in of itself, secures retention. [. . .] They're able to pursue the goals that they have. So yeah . . . I mean communication is the number one retention . . . saver. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: How Administrators'

Philosophy/Theories Applied In Program.

In terms of the learning and development paradigms expressed by Hossler and Bean, administrators stated the following when asked to describe how the philosophy/theories they espoused/used were applied in the program: identifying at-risk students, providing support/services, and going the extra mile. Examples of responses are presented in the following quotations:

 [. . .] I see it as my duty to keep the student here, to get the help that they need, so that they can graduate. And if the support system means doing the workshops, having the tutorial program, having the . . . the, the academic coaching, I think all those variables help to . . . generate an interest in the student's ability to learn and to gain as much as possible, so that they can feel a part of the process . . . and want to stay, because we have the support system here for them.

I think the way [. . .] Health and Wellness [Center] can contribute to that, is by going the extra mile when a student comes in to let them know that we truly care about them as an individual. And not just . . . providing . . . sort of . . . regimented . . . pre-programmed care you know, that we try to tailor to what it is that they need to their particular situation. And, go the extra mile by communicating with them by email. By follow-up calls to see how they're feeling. I used to send them E-cards, you know. [. . .] So I think all of that is . . . related to helping someone feel like "wow. There was really someone there when I felt sick," you know. [. . .] So it's, it's by doing high touch . . . I think. Interactive care.

217

Summary. Themes that emerged regarding the philosophy/theories that administrators espoused/used in EWS included: helping students manage expectations (realistic expectations about college), providing students with academic support (e.g., peer tutoring, academic coaching), spiritual services, and/or financial resources, equipping students for success (e.g., writing, math, life management, and time management skills), connecting students to the institution, being in constant communication with students, and ensuring there is group responsibility (from different areas) in retaining students. While most administrators did not cite a particular theorist, their statements did align with Tinto's academic and social engagement theory.

Themes that emerged regarding how the philosophy/theories administrators espoused/used was applied to achieve learning and development included: providing support services (e.g., workshops, tutorial programs, academic coaching) to generate students' interest, ability to learn, and feeling as part of the process, identifying students who may be at risk early and providing them with support, and going the extra mile (not pre-programmed/regimentation care) to assist students (e.g., emails, follow-up phone calls, interactive care). These themes relating to in-and-out-class activities and enhanced learning were consistent with Hossler and Bean's learning and development paradigms (Borland, 2001, p. 374).

Administrators' EWS Training.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Administrators collectively stated that they did not receive formal training to work with EWS and EWS students having difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information. An example of an administrator's response is presented below:

[. . .] I've never had specific sort of training specifically for that. But I guess from my counseling background. For several years I've worked in academia. Discussions with colleagues . . . conferences that I may have gone on pertaining to the topic. Last year I was in a conference [. . .] [regarding] disability issues, but we talked about things in the classroom, not only for students with disability. But it's a plethora of experiences I've had. No formal training per say. But I . . . What I do, I pool the resources I've gained from different areas. My degree background is in counseling - - guidance and counseling in college level. [. . .] Being on the retention committee, being on Student Concerns Committee, coordinator of this program, counseling background, meetings with faculty members. I [have] never gone to a training session per say that deals exclusively with that. But I've been able to pool my resources together.

[. . .] I wouldn't necessarily say specifically trained. I would say that's something that's [. . .] more of a cultural thing where [. . .] if you ever notice something that something is wrong with a student, please say something to your supervisor. Please say something to the Student Success Office. [. . .] [Text combined] [. . .] In terms of specific guidebooks and things like that, there's really no specific guide or anything like that. [. . .]

Document.

In terms of training for academic coaches to work with EWS and EWS students with difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, the academic coaching application and the academic coaching manual did not indicate training for academic coaches in this area.

Summary.

In terms of training to work with EWS students and assisting them with analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information the major theme that emerged was administrators were not provided with formal training necessary for fostering student learning and development best. Some administrators stated however that support staff members may have had non-EWS training (e.g., webinars) similar to administrators' training. An administrator stated the following in terms of training for a part-time case manager in the Student Success Center:

[. . .] With my case manager, the part-time person that I have, you know, she's the one working with students who are identified through Performa - - the predictive modeling. I found some really good webinars from Cengage, which is a publisher that specializes. They've kind of really jumped into their developmental education field. [. . .] They've developed some really good series of developmental education webinars. But, I sent her the ones that are not subject specific, because she's not a math or English teacher. But there were a lot of them that were on just helping students being successful. A lot of the soft skills kind of stuff that she would end up talking to them about. [. . .] All of the staff had kind of has similar training to what I've experienced. [. . .]

Administrators stated that academic coaches were furnished a coaching manual, received training, and attended an academic support meeting once per month to receive ongoing training or discuss issues that arose (training conducted in Student Success Center). It was noted, however, similar to training for administrators, this training was more generic and did not include formal training to work with EWS students or help them analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. An example of a response is listed below:

[. . .] There's a coaching [training] manual. And, then there's training offered at the beginning of the year. And then he hosts an academic support meeting once a month. [. . .] So once a month he has a meeting with all the coaches and the tutors. And so . . . he brings them together. And so, he just does ongoing training or talk about issues that have come up, or you know, kind of hear from everybody at once - - "what's going on? Things that we need to be aware of!" [. . .] So, all those kinds of logistics can get worked out at that . . . that monthly meeting. [. . .]

Administrators' Personal Experience in the EWS.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

All of the administrators interviewed were involved in the EWS at some level. Examples of administrators' responses regarding their personal experience in the EWS are presented below:

My personal experience in the early warning system? That's very broad. Ok . . . [long pause] . . . I feel . . . that . . . students do not make use of the . . . the . . . particular those who have been given early warnings . . . whose, whose name come to our attention. We may reach out to them and try to encourage them to come in with a soft letter. But sometimes they just don't respond. I will try their private email addresses, their personal telephones. Some may respond. Some may not. I do not know if it is . . . apathy. [. . .] There are some who . . . do come and it's encouraging, because it means to me that there is someone out there that we're reaching. So, it's rewarding when you see students come. [. . .] I try to reach them at an early . . . and say "look, this is what's really happening. [. . .]

Well, I've been on the Student[s] Concerns Committee for . . . I think this is my 3rd year I want to say. Now although I'm kind of a silent voice on that committee because the students have . . . you know, privilege . . . their medical information is privileged, I can certainly . . . ask how a certain student is doing; or . . . keep my ears out . . . for what . . . other encounters a student has had on campus. Like, if they've interacted with security, or if there've been concerns about their class performance or their attendance, or that sort of thing. That can help me to . . . when I see the student, you know, kind of ask some additional questions. So that really is my only . . . connection with the early warning . . . what we call early alert. I send early alerts to Student Success [Center] when students are very ill. For example, you know, if I have a patient that has had pneumonia . . . or something. I'll send a . . . what we call an early alert report. [Text combined] [. . .] So that they know, you know. I'll say "I anticipate the student will be out of class," you know, "the next 3 to 4 days." And you know "please work with the student as they try to . . . make up their work; or, you know, "this student is concerned about falling behind because of this ongoing illness"; or you know, that sort of thing.

Summary.

Regarding administrators' personal experience in the EWS program, the major

theme that emerged was all administrators had some level of interaction with the EWS

program through the Students Concerns Committee, a campus-wide committee formed to

address EWS concerns. In terms of subthemes, administrators collectively stated that

many departments were represented on the Students Concerns Committee. Some

administrators stated that they were not directly involved in the EWS, except through

participation on the Students Concerns Committee and sending in alerts. Administrators'

221

individual experiences in EWS varied, and included: implementing and overseeing with

the EWS program, cheering the Students Concerns Committee, and overseeing the

Student Success Center that houses the academic support services, attending the Students

Concerns Committee meetings, coordinating the early alerts received, communicating

with those who submitted early alerts, and educating staff members in his/her department

about the EWS.

The next section of the dissertation will focus on assessment measures and

services/critical departments, as they relate to EWS.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 1.

Largely, there was evidence that the institution offered a wide range of EWS

services frequently and that EWS retention efforts were aimed at not only dealing with

first-year students at the first sign of academic struggles, but also prior to enrollment.

The early alert, midterm grade, and predictive reporting through pre-matriculation data

systems/programs and the Bridges mentoring program, were highlighted. EWS was

highlighted without prompting, with majority of the administrators (four of the six)

referencing EWS; which indicated a high priority of EWS at the institution. The services

just mentioned (with the exception of the midterm grade reporting system orchestrated

through the Registrar's Office), along with many of the services students undergo once

identified, were all housed in the Student Success Center (the central hub where everyone

brings students' issues or deficits). Other services (e.g., Health and Wellness

representative, Writing Center) not housed in the Student Success Center were also

connected. Evidence emerged suggesting that theories (e.g., Tinto) and research did

guide efforts to achieve learning and development paradigms, although much was aligned

closely with a student deficit lens. Administrators also decried the lack of specific EWS-related training needed to foster student learning and development optimally. Finally, even though administrator experiences with the EWS varied, all were involved at some level (e.g., participation on the campus-wide Students Concerns Committee, submitting alerts). Also, in general, there was a sense of administrator frustration with the system because of low student and faculty participation.

Assessment Measures to Identify, Assess, Track, Monitor, and Address Students' Issues or Deficits; Services/Critical Departments such as EWS Working Together

The second research question explored (a) how assessment measures were used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues or deficits in EWS and (b) and whether or not university services and critical departments such as EWS were working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students. The first part of this research question below explores how assessment measures were used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues or deficits in EWS.

Assessment Measures to Identify Students' Issues or Deficits

The following EWS were identified as main themes during the interviews as assessment measures to identify students' issues or deficits: early alert system, the midterm grade deficiency reporting system, the Bridges program, and pre-matriculation data through predictive modeling.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

The Early Alert System.

In terms of the early alert system theme to identify EWS students, anyone (faculty, staff, parents, or other students) could report a student through the early alert system when they had a concern. Examples of administrators' responses are presented below:

> [. . .] [The early alert system] is a system that is open to faculty, staff, or students themselves, to go in and say you know, "hey, I am concerned about you know, Jonny." And, that service then . . . we try to make it very convenient. It's located on the web and a number of different places. And so, that kicks off then a domino effect of things that happen once someone submits and early alert. [. . .]
>
> [. . .] If we notice that there is a problem, or we notice that something may be going on in their life (or home life or personal problem) then that's when the early alert comes in where we will . . . Like I said we'll go in, we'll log a report, and then from there more . . . people are brought into that student's life. [. . .]

The administrators also thought that the early alert system was relatively simple to navigate and conveniently located in numerous places, including the web.

The Midterm Grade Deficiency Reporting System.

In terms of the midterm grade deficiency reporting system theme to identify students' issues or deficits, administrators collectively stated that it was something orchestrated through the Registrar's Office. One administrator also stated that the Registrar's Office sends the faculty a letter asking them to communicate information about students (e.g., midterm grades, course attendance), as well as to continually remind faculty of the early alert system.

Administrators collectively stated that after faculty report students' deficiency grade through the midterm deficiency grade reporting system, every student who received

at least one failing grade by midterm would receive a letter from the Registrar's Office. One administrator's description of this identification process is presented below:

> Well we have the midterm deficiency grades . . . that's given to every student. Those who . . . The professors will submit . . . a deficiency grade. And then the Office of the Registrar . . . sends a letter to every student who has at least 1 failing grade by midterm. At least one. That they're not doing well . . . in that class, and they need to meet with us here for some, some support.

The Bridges Mentoring Program.

In terms of the Bridges Mentoring program theme, administrators collectively stated that students with "both a math and language remediation" need were identified, brought into the university early and underwent an "intensive academic and social" program.

The Pre-Matriculation Data Through Predictive Modeling (or Power Alert).

In terms of the pre-matriculation data through predictive modeling (or power alert) theme, administrators collectively stated that all students were "ranked in terms of likelihood to stay," "a group of students from the lower rankings" were subsequently chosen, and the Student Success Office part-time case manager then "oversees [the students] for the whole first year." Many administrators believed that because the pre-matriculation data through predictive modeling would show who was more likely to leave after their first semester, they could target these students and provide needed additional support before entering the early alert system. One administrator's response, which highlighted the predictive modeling theme, is listed below:

> [. . .] A group of students that are identified through predictive modeling . . . by Performa, is the name of the company that does it for us. [. . .] [The part-time case manager assigned to these students] does a number of things with them - - like personalized post-card contact, phone calls, targeted registration, outreach, coffee chats. She'll invite them to come and meet with her. And so, she, you

know, kind of does a number of different things. And this is the first full year that we've done that. So it's still kind of . . . we are still trying to kinda figure out what kind of things are effective and what things aren't. So that's very much in development. [. . .]

Document.

Documents such as the Student Success Center's and Academic Support and Disability Services brochures stated that the institution "fosters a collaborative environment by encouraging faculty, family, friends, staff, and other students to intervene at the first sign of difficulty." The Student Success Center brochure also stated that "success is no accident" and students "need a crew to help [. . .] *them* stay the course," such as an "experienced [Student Success Center] team [. . .] that has journeyed this way before [italics added]" and can help them prepare for success. Documentation such as the Student Success Center brochure stated that "faculty members, staff, or friends, are urged to contact the student at the first sign of difficulty, and fill out an Early Alert form if the problem persists."

Additionally, administrators stated that the early alert was very simple and conveniently located in numerous places on the web, which was also noted in documents (the Student Success Center's brochure and the Academic Coaching Manual). Administrators also stated when an early alert form was completed through the web, the form was submitted to the Student Success Center where the information was shared with appropriate others (e.g., the Students Concerns Committee). Finally, the documents stated also that the early alert form was particularly important if individuals had a concern about a student. As illustrated in the documents (Student Success Center's brochure, Academic Support and Disability Services' brochure, and academic coaching

manual) and administrators' quotations listed earlier, concerns reported through the early

alert system/program included behavioral and/or non-behavioral (e.g., academics) issues

or deficits.

Summary.

When asked about the assessment measurements in place to identify students'

issues or deficits in the EWS, the themes that emerged during the interviews were: early

alert system, the midterm grade deficiency reporting system, the Bridges mentoring

program, and the pre-matriculation data through predictive modeling program. All of

these programs were housed in the Student Success Center, which administrators

described as the "central hub" to bring concerns about students. Once students' issues or

deficits were identified through the identification processes, the information was shared

with others (e.g., the Student Success Center, the Students Concerns Committee) as noted

in the interviews and documents. The identification themes are summarized in an

administrator's response below:

> OK. The identification portion really comes through the early alert forms that
> people submit, and then also the midterm deficiencies. So those are the two ways
> that we identify, who we need to look at. And, also the Performa ranking [pre-
> matriculation data through predictive modeling] that's done on students that are
> coming in [with at-risk factors]. So those are the identification layer! [. . .]

Besides predictive modeling where at-risk students could be identified, students

were sometimes identified through the admissions/application process when they shared

their personal stories/testimonies with admissions counselors. As per one administrator:

> [. . .] They've shared their personal stories and testimonies over, you know, over
> 11 months to 17 months of working with us through the application process. So
> they're comfortable in coming to us and saying "hey, this school isn't for us. I'm
> planning on leaving. What do I need to do?" At that point in time, we hop on the
> early alert system. We'll send in a request and then our Student Success

department will follow up with them . . . to see if there is any mediation or intervention that we can do. [. . .] So our Student Success department will assess the . . . the issue that the student is experiencing . . . and then . . . from there, assign it to somebody in their department to follow up and then mentor to that person to see again, not to convince them to stay, but see, you know, maybe they didn't realize that we offer some things that they aren't aware of.

Assessment Measures to Assess Students' Issues/Deficits

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Informal Assessment.

A major theme that emerged regarding assessing students' issues and deficits in the EWS was before students underwent the "domino effect of things [to address their issues or deficits]," students' issues or deficits are assessed "informally." The informal assessment theme is summarized in the following administrator's response:

> [. . .] Assessment is done very informally. Like, we don't have structured assessment, which I would like to see more of that. Assessment is really more about ok who knows the student already? Do they live on campus? Who can we connect with to kind of figure out what's going on with the student. [. . .] If all else fails you know, we'll try to reach out to them and have them come in to meet with either [. . .] [the Assistant Director of Student Success Center] who does the academic support, or myself, and we'll do an assessment that way and just kind of try to talk to them and find out what's going on. [. . .] And so yeah, the assessment phase is very informal, not structured. And I don't really have like data on that. [. . .]

The following informal assessment measures were mentioned during the interviews as subthemes: sitting down and speaking with the student when they were alerted and visited the office for assistance, meeting with students every week through the Bridges mentoring program, and/or meeting with students when they went into the Student Success Center for weekly academic coaching, progress reporting (conducted

during weeks 4 and 12 of the semester), and conducting assessment through the

workshops.

Sitting Down and Speaking With Students.

The informal assessment subtheme of sitting down and speaking with students

when they went into the offices for assistance is presented in the following quotation:

> [. . .] We pull them into our office[s] and sit down and talk to them. With
> students that are at risk, we don't really . . . isolate them out in any way. Like we
> don't . . . obviously we would never say to them "you're an at-risk student" or
> anything like that. We treat them the same as all of the other students and give
> them the same support and advise that we would give to any student.

Academic Coaching Intake Form and Workshop Progress Report Form.

In terms of assessment conducted through the academic coaching subtheme,

students had to complete an intake form the first day of visiting the office for academic

coaching. And, in terms of assessments conducted through the workshops subtheme,

students were given a progress report form during weeks 4 and 12 of the semester which

they needed to have the faculty complete. Examples of administrators' responses

regarding these themes are quoted below:

> The intake form is given to the coaches so that they can . . . on first meeting with
> the students, will get an assessment of what issues the student may have; and
> these topics that are circled, are indicated on the form, are topics for discussion
> later on during the course of the semester. So they can attack each topic at a
> different time on their own, and they get the resources for that. So that we get an
> idea as to what we need to work with. The time log, it's something that's given to
> [. . .] the students when they come in, so that . . . we can see how they manage
> their [time] [. . .]. So that we can now tweek that, based on the discussion we
> have with the student [. . .].

> [. . .] The other thing that we do is oftentimes in coaching, there's midterm
> deficiencies, yes; but we know that the compliance is so poor. What they do, both
> in academic coaching and the Bridges program, is that students are given a
> progress report form that they have to take around to their professors in weeks 4
> and 12. And so in those 2 points of the semester, this form solicits what their

grades are so far, how many late tardies have they had, how many absences have they had, and any comments that the professor wants to offer. So, that's one way that we sort of interact then with the academic piece that's going on. [. . .]

Summary.

In addition to the informal assessment measures mentioned above to assess students' issues or deficits, the following were also noted during the interviews: students underwent a five-to-ten minute assessment during the workshops, pre-matriculation background data being used for predictive modeling, and SAT or ACT being used for the Bridges mentoring program. In addition, for the midterm deficiency reporting system, students' issues or deficits were determined through faculty who report grades below a "C-" in a course; and for the early alert program, specific categories were listed on the form for individuals to indicate students' issues or deficits (e.g., poor attendance, failing grades on quizzes, behavioral issues). An administrator's description of the early alert categories is listed below:

> Categories such as . . . academic assignments not turned in. And those reports obviously would have to come from professors. Class attendance problems. Again from professors. Failed exams and quizzes. Failing courses. Poor attendance in class. And then behavioral issues. Community issues - - that would be . . . Well, they put a number of things in there like . . . family situations, family health sort of things. Financial needs. And then you know . . . family illnesses. Home sick and just not adjusting. And then mental health issues. And some disability issues. So. Yeah.

Assessment Measures to Address Students' Issues/Deficits

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Once an early alert is submitted, stated an administrator, it then "kicks off [. . .] a domino effect of things [services, interventions, etc.] that happen [to address the concern,

or students' issues or deficits]." This is the major theme that was echoed too by the other administrators. For example, administrators collectively stated that once an early alert was submitted by an individual and received in the Student Success Center, the Student Success Center would respond both to the person reporting the early alert and contact the student by email (or by phone if they do not respond to the email) to explain how the office can provide tutors, academic coaches, etc., to assist them if they schedule an appointment with the office.

In another example, administrators stated that once students with both a math and language deficiency were identified through the Bridges mentoring program, the students (e.g., approximately 36 students were enrolled in the year 2011) were required to meet every week with an advisor in the Student Success Center. Each week students underwent coaching, designed to hold students accountable and ensure they were doing well in both the program and their courses. Students also took a one-credit first year experience course designed for students in the Bridges mentoring program.

Document.

The Student Success Center's brochure and academic coaching manual stated that "once the [early alert] notice is received [in the Student Success Center], the student will be contacted to offer assistance and to link them with the resources needed for success." Other documents, such as the letter that was sent to students who were failing a course(s), the letter that was sent to students who stopped attending class(es), and the academic warning/probation letter that was sent as a follow-up to the email the Registrar's Office sends to students with GPA below a 2.0, were also acquired through the Student Success Center to explore assessment measures to address students' issues or deficits.

The letter to academic warning/probation students stated it was being sent to students to provide them with the "the opportunity to improve" their academic standing through attending weekly academic coaching sessions. The letter to students regarding attendance problems stated that the professor had notified the Student Success Center the student had stopped attending the course. The letter went on to further state that "this greatly concerns" the office and that the student's success in the class was greatly dependent upon his/her attendance. Similar to the letter sent to students with attendance problems, the letter sent to students with failing courses was also sent from the Student Success Center to students because the faculty identified an issue. The letter also stated that the student's issue was a great concern to the Student Success Center, which was reaching out to make the student aware of available resources (e.g., academic programs such as peer tutoring and academic coaching) that could help him/her become successful in the course.

Also similar to the letter for attendance problems, the letter for failing courses, as well as the other academic letters sent through the Student Success Center, encouraged students to promptly contact the Student Success Center regarding the situation and to promptly follow-up with their professor and the Student Success Center's academic support to address the situation. Students were also notified in the academic warning/probation letter, that faculty advisors and the dean of their school were informed of the steps taken by the Student Success Center to provide them with a full range of available support. Those who submitted the early alert (e.g., faculty) were also copied on the letters that the Student Success Center sent to the students.

Summary.

Administrators collectively stated that EWS students undergo a domino effect of things to address their issues or deficits. For example, the Student Success Center contacts students identified through the early alert system to provide them with assistance. In another example, students in the Bridges mentoring program meet every week with an advisor, undergo academic coaching each week, and take a one-credit first year experience course. Documents also stated that students were contacted offering assistance, linked with resources to improve success, and assigned tutors or academic coaches who could assist them on a weekly basis.

Assessment Measures to Track and Monitor Students' Issues/Deficits

Administrators' Interview Responses.

The majority of administrators stated that in terms of tracking and monitoring, the Student Success Center tracked the services:

> [. . .] Student Success [Center] tracks - - has several computer methods to track students . . . and to make sure that no one falls through the cracks that has gotten on the list. And . . . they try to stay in touch. [. . .] And they do monitor it like I say. They do have some programs in the computer.

Tracking and Monitoring Through the Early Alert and the Students Concerns Committee.

In terms of tracking and monitoring, a major theme that emerged during the interviews was, tracking and monitoring were conducted through the early alert and the Students Concerns Committee. How students were doing was always a discussion at the monthly Students Concerns Committee meetings and tracking the information discussed

in the meetings (and tracking of students) was conducted through the Advicate system

(the same system through which early alerts are reported). Administrators collectively

stated that students were also placed on an archive list and an active list in the Advicate

system, and were monitored for as long as necessary. As one administrator noted:

> [. . .] It's evaluated by the Student Success Office [or Center], the dean of
> students; and bringing in the other members of that committee as appropriate as
> needed . . . to . . . help assess that student situation and what's really going on with
> them. [. . .] Once the Student Success Office [Center] evaluates it, they reach
> out to the departments to help in the identification of the problem. And also to
> help . . . assign those resources and get the ball rolling for getting the different
> counselors and advisors involved for helping the student as part of the . . . as part
> of like assessing that problem. And then from there, the, the individual people
> that students are assigned, they will report back to Student Success [Center] for,
> you know, how well is the student doing; and monitoring and keeping track of
> their process. And then it's just a continual cycle of . . . we keep reevaluating the
> student. [. . .] Once they're monitored for a significant amount of time and we
> determine that they are ok, then they can be removed . . . off of that watch list if
> you will. [. . .]

Student Success Center's Advicate System.

Administrators also stated that students' issues or deficits were tracked in the

Student Success Center through a system called Advicate (which is the same system

through which early alerts are reported). This theme is summarized in the following

quotation:

> [. . .] The way that it works with kinda recording what happens there [the
> Students Concerns Committee meeting], is there's a spreadsheet that we . . . that
> we all receive about a week ahead of time [before the Students Concerns
> Committee meetings]. And our job then is to check with our peers. So let's say
> the Registrar's representative will get it. Her job is to check with her peers, and
> say "hey have you interacted with any students? Anything that I need me to know
> that I need to take to the meeting." And so she'll come to the meeting. [. . .]
> [administrator] is there at the meeting and she will be taking notes the whole time.
> And she will come back and she enters it into Advicate, which is the computer
> system that we use. So we don't really have minutes of the meeting kind of thing.
> She just updates the student records in Advicate. With any information that . . .
> that comes out at the meeting. [. . .]

Different Services Students Attend Through the Accumedia System.

Another theme that emerged regarding tracking and monitoring was the services

EWS students attended (e.g., tutoring, academic coaching, workshops) were tracked and

assessed through a program called Accumedia (with the exception of the Counseling

Center and Health and Wellness Center's services).

> Well, the software package that we use is call[ed], Accumedia. And it really
> tracks . . . it really tracks who's going to the services. How often? What time
> they're there? What they're there for? Who they're there to see? It doesn't assess
> the students per say. But just tracking . . . Actually monitoring the traffic, the
> flow of traffic to and from the centers and what the students' assessments are of
> the services that we provide.

Academic Coaching Weekly Meetings' Synopsis.

Administrators also stated that students were monitored through the academic

coaching program. Academic coaches were required to submit a synopsis regarding

EWS students' weekly meetings. As one administrator stated, which was echoed by

other administrators:

> [. . .] A student would meet with a coach once per week for 30 minutes. And
> they'll do that for the course of the semester. [. . .] They're [academic coaches
> are] suppose to submit reports at the end of every semester on . . . just a synopsis
> as to what had happened throughout the course of the [. . .] coaching sessions. [.
> . .]

Counseling and Psychological Services' Center, and/or Health and Wellness

Center.

Administrators stated that the services students attended were tracked through the

Accumedia system and not the Counseling Center or Health and Wellness Center. Some

administrators stated that they may make personal notes when a student was referred to

the Counseling Center or the Health and Wellness Center, but tracking and monitoring of

students' issues or deficits within these services was not permitted. As one administrator

stated, which was echoed by many other administrators, "we can't confirm or deny that

the student is currently a patient or a client" because of confidentiality reasons.

Document.

Regarding the theme that emerged for tracking and monitoring through the

Accumedia program, the academic coaching manual stated that students were required to

use the Accumedia system to "sign in and out every time they meet with" their academic

coach. As per the manual "this program [Accumedia] tracks the attendance records of

coaching and tutoring, and it is important to have an accurate report of these activities."

Summary.

In addition to the tracking and monitoring being conducted through the Students

Concerns Committee, other themes regarding assessment measures also emerged. First,

students' attendance in services was tracked and assessed through the Accumedia system,

however, tracking and monitoring were not conducted through the Counseling Center, or

Health and Wellness Center. Second, students' issues or deficits were tracked in the

Student Success Center through a system called Advicate. Third, academic coaches were

required to submit synopses to the Student Success Center regarding the weekly meetings

with EWS students. An administrator also stated that students identified through the

admissions process with the inability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information

were added to a list of provisional students rather than submitted through the EWS. This

provisional list was then submitted to the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office

to facilitate reporting on these students. Additionally, the administrator who oversaw the

Bridges program kept a record of (and report) what was done with those students.

How assessment measures were used to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' issues/deficits in EWS were discussed above. In the section below, the second part of this research question explored whether university services and critical departments such as EWS were working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 2a.

Evidence showed that numerous assessment measures (e.g., early alert, midterm grade reporting, and predictive modeling systems/programs, and the Bridges program) were used at the institution to identify EWS students' issues or deficits; however, they were mostly used on a broad-based level. Formal assessment measures to assess students' issues or deficits on an individual-based level were not utilized, and students' issues or deficits were assessed informally. Informal assessment included: (a) speaking with the students during Bridges mentoring or academic coaching weekly meetings, (b) faculty comments and academic and behavioral issues categories on the early alert form; (c) midterm grades, (d) pre-matriculation background data, (e) progress reporting, and (f) the five-to-ten minute assessment during the workshops. Assessment measures to address students' retention issues or deficits included a "domino effect of things" (e.g. tutoring, weekly one-on-one coaching meetings, Writing Center). Assessment measures to track and monitor were also in place, and were conducted through: the early alert, Students Concerns Committee, Advicate system (active and archival lists), and Accumedia system (all services except the Counseling Center and Health and Wellness Center's services), and academic coaching program's weekly meetings' synopsis.

Students were monitored for as long as necessary; and how students were doing was always a topic of discussion.

Services/Critical Departments such as EWS Working Together

The question arises "Are EWS services/ critical departments working together to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc. to benefit students in place at the institution?"

Administrators' Interview Responses: Monthly Students Concerns Committee & Monthly Students Concerns Committee Meetings.

The theme that emerged regarding services/critical departments working together was services/critical departments worked together through a monthly Students Concerns Committee to share EWS students' information to benefit students. During the monthly Students Concerns Committee meetings, the services/critical departments discussed students who were identified through the early alert system.

The Students Concerns Committee was implemented through the Student Success Center, which an administrator described the Student Success Center as the "central hub" for receiving student concerns, providing students with support through support services, and alerting many departments of students' issues or deficits. Administrators define the Student Success Center's role as an office that provides "academic support and disability services."

An administrator described the central role of the Students Concerns Committee as "as a group of us that deals with issues that comes up. Students who come through our radar. And we deal practically with students who go through the early alert system."

Administrators collectively stated that the Students Concerns Committee consisted of a broad range of services/critical departments coming together once per month to collaborate on EWS and share student information. Students Concerns Committee members included several individuals from the Student Success Center, a records coordinator from the Registrar's Office, the director of admissions (who is also an admissions counselor), an associate director of the Financial Aid Office, the coordinator for the Residential Life Office, supervisor for the Safety and Security Office and a nurse practitioner from the Health and Wellness Center.

Student Concerns Committee Members Discuss Students and Are Provided With Updated Information: Nurse Practitioner from Health and Wellness Is Silent Participant On Students Concerns Committee.

In terms of members from numerous services/critical departments coming together during the monthly Students Concerns Committee meetings to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc. to benefit students, a subtheme that emerged was Students Concerns Committee members discussed students and were provided with updated information. This was also discussed in the section of the dissertation on assessment measures to track and monitor students' retention issues/deficits. Administrators collectively stated that the coordinator for the Student Success Center tracks all of the early alert information and provide Students Concerns Committee members with a spreadsheet (an updated list of students' information and the names of new students who are added to the list) prior to the monthly Students Concerns Committee meetings so that committee members can "check with their peers."

Administrators also collectively stated that each time the Students Concerns Committee

members met to discuss EWS, the committee members were also provided with an

updated list of EWS students. This theme is summarized in the following quotation:

> [. . .] We have a core group of people [. . .] [on the Students Concerns
> Committee]. [. . .] So we come together [. . .] once a month rather. And we
> bring up the issues that concerns students and we talk about it. So we share ideas.
> Share issues. Round table discussion. So that's one way from the Students
> Concerns Committee. [. . .]

Administrators also stated that information was shared within the Students

Concerns Committee so that other departments would be aware of students'

issues/deficits. Administrators collectively stated that all members (with the exception of

one committee member, the Health and Wellness Center administrator) openly discussed

students' concerns raised through the early alert. The administrator from the Health and

Wellness Center remained a silent participant during the meetings for confidentiality

reasons. Administrators' responses regarding the sharing of information within the

Students Concerns Committee meetings, and sharing of information with

departments/individuals not within the Students Concerns Committee meetings, are

presented in the following quotations:

> [. . .] We share that information [general reports or summaries] with each other .
> . . so that way . . . the other departments know that . . . you know, know a
> particular student status and that kind of thing. But . . . like I said, like there's . . .
> there's that fine line of what information we're told in here, doesn't necessarily
> leave here. [. . .] We on the committee continually remind others in our offices
> the same thing. Like, "if you notice something wrong with the student," you
> know, "write down their name. Write down the situation. Do an early alert. Tell
> us, as well as doing the early alert, and then we can go back and refer to our
> records, and our database, and see if it is one of the students that is on that . . . list.
> [. . .]
>
> [. . .] There's no like specific report I bring back to my office. It's more of like,
> let's say . . . in the meeting we, we all become aware of, just through our mutual

conversation, we become aware of 5 situations that are extreme. There's 5 extreme situations that are a problem. [. . .] In that instance we may go back and say something . . . in regards to the situation. But, not necessarily identifying or singling out particular students per say. But just . . . keeping them aware of "well, if a student walks in with one of those 5 situations," keep it more general, "say something to us." Like say something to me or do an early alert. That kind of thing. [. . .]

Relationship Between Students Concerns Committee and Health and Wellness and Counseling and Psychological Services Center In Terms of Feedback.

When administrators were questioned about the Health and Wellness administrator's participation in the Students Concern Committee, and the relationship between the Health and Wellness, Counseling and Psychological Services Center, and Students Concerns Committee in terms of feedback, administrators stated that the Health and Wellness administrator could not provide information about students, even if the students were not assigned to them, and information could only be shared with critical departments if the students signed a release form.

In terms of the relationship between the Students Concerns Committee and services such as the Counseling Center, the following subtheme emerged: there was not a representative from the Counseling Center on the Students Concerns Committee and a relationship did not exist between the Students Concerns Committee (and the Student Success Center) and the Counseling Center outside of the Student Success Center referring students to the Counseling Center.

In terms of the relationship between the Students Concerns Committee (and the Student Success Center) and the Health and Wellness Services Office, the subtheme that emerged was there was an administrator from the Health and Wellness Office on the Students Concerns Committee; however, he/she was a "silent participant." However,

241

even though the Health and Wellness administrator was silent, he/she could ask during

the committee meetings how a particular student was doing:

> [. . .] Now although I'm kind of a silent voice on that [Students Concerns]
> Committee because the students have . . . you know, privilege . . . their medical
> information is privileged, I can certainly . . . ask how a certain student is doing.
> Or . . . keep my ears out . . . for what . . . other encounters a student has had on
> campus. Like, if they've interacted with security, or if there've been concerns
> about their class performance or their attendance, or that sort of thing. That can
> help me to . . . when I see the student, you know, kind of ask some additional
> questions. So that really is my only . . . connection with the early warning . . .
> what we call early alert. I send early alerts to [the] Student Success [Center]
> when students are very ill. [. . .]

Faculty Participation In The EWS.

No Faculty on the Students Concerns Committee. In terms of the subtheme of

faculty involvement in the EWS, an administrator stated that "we don't yet have a faculty

representative on the [Students Concerns] Committee. We have a request on the table for

them to choose a representative or two because they have important roles." The

administrator further stated that "we haven't been able to get a faculty member [on the

committee]. We're still working on that." Other administrators made similar statements

during their interviews.

Faculty Submit Early Alerts (Less Reporting of Midterm Deficiencies and

Increase in Early Alert Reporting). In terms of the subtheme of faculty participation in

the EWS, administrators collectively stated that faculty participated in the EWS program

by submitting early alert forms through the system. As per administrators: "more staff

are reporting through the early alert than [. . .] faculty", "I know it is not as high as we

would like it to be", "I think that . . . that . . . is improving", and "it's not mandatory [. . .

] but concerned professors will bring it to our attention."

Some administrators stated that they could not provide information regarding the percentage of faculty participation in the program because they lacked the information. These administrators stated that the Student Success Center would be better able to provide that information. Administrators who provided information regarding the percentage of faculty participation in the program during probing questions stated:

> [. . .] We have some of the same faculty using it. But this year I've seen a number that have never used it before. So I would say probably a 50% increase or so if I were to guess. I just haven't run the numbers.

> I think the last time that I actually checked it, because I manually, just out of curiosity, obtained a list of courses that are being taught that semester and compared that to the number of courses that showed up with midterm deficiency reports; and the percentage in terms of number of courses who reported [faculty who actually go in and do the midterm reporting], was around 26 percent. Which meant that 80 something . . . you know . . . 70, what is it? . . . almost 80 percent of the courses do not report deficiencies. Does that mean that many students are doing well, or they just didn't bother?

The administrator who stated that 26% of the faculty reported midterm deficiencies, and who also raised the question "does that mean that many students are doing well, or they [faculty] just didn't bother [to report midterm deficiencies]," was asked probing questions regarding faculty participation. The administrator was asked if the answer to the question that he/she raised was because faculty did not bother to report deficiencies; then, why did the faculty not participate? And, did faculty need to be more informed about the importance of the program? The administrator responded:

> Yeah, we definitely have launched a campaign since then to really stress how important it is; and to explain to them, here is what happens when you report it. Because, if they don't know that there's this whole launching of interventions that happens based on midterm deficiency reporting, they may not realize then how important it is to put that in. So we have definitely done more educating; and I think that has helped. The Registrar last semester, this is a new thing she tried, she went in and identified which ones had not reported. Which is very time consuming, cause the system doesn't automatically tell you. And she sent a

reminder email to them saying, you know, "I noticed that you haven't reported anything [. . .]." And sure enough, a whole wave of deficiencies got entered after she did that. So I think almost sort of like, realizing that someone is actually paying attention. I think up to this point, there's been a feeling that nobody even knows whether they are reported or not. No one is checking it! [. . .]

Faculty Verbally Encouraged Through Top Administration And The

Registrar's Office To Participate In The EWS

Regarding the theme of faculty encouragement to participate in the EWS, some administrators stated that assessment material/statistical analysis/data regarding "what have been happening over the semester" was provided to top administration (e.g., director, dean, board of trustees). Administrators also stated that the director of the Student Success Center encouraged faculty to participate in the EWS, as summarized below:

> [. . .] The director of Student Success [Center] goes to each . . . college and school here meets once a month. And [. . .] [the director] tries to go at the beginning of each Fall semester and tell . . . you know, encourage them about the early alert system. That . . . how simple it is to enter it on the computer. And to please use our system . . . to help our students. [. . .]

> [. . .] [The director has] really focused [. . .] effort more in the last year in marketing to the faculty side. To help them understand what it is that we do and what difference it makes.

Additionally, when an administrator was asked a probing question if faculty were encouraged through top administration to report students through the EWS, the administrator responded that there was verbal (and not written) communication from the deans to the faculty to participate in the EWS. The faculty was also encouraged by the Registrar's Office to report students. The Registrar's Office communicates to faculty during enrollment verification to notify the Registrar's Office if a student was not attending and the last date of attendance when they are submitting midterm deficiency

244

reports. Through this communication, the faculty was once again provided with information regarding the Early Alert system.

Feedback/Update Communicated Between Student Success Center And

Faculty. Another subtheme that emerged regarding faculty participation in the EWS was feedback was communicated between the Student Success Center and faculty. Faculty who submit early alerts were provided with feedback. In terms of this subtheme, two additional subthemes emerged. In terms of the first additional subtheme, administrators collectively stated that the Student Success Center provided faculty with feedback (a brief email) to "let them know what happened to their notes of concern." In terms of the second additional subtheme, an administrator stated that faculty members also communicated feedback/comments to the Student Success Center through the early alert and the progress report form.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Top Administration and Others Are

Provided With Feedback.

Another subtheme that emerged in terms of feedback was top administration and others were provided with feedback. In addition to Student Success Committee and faculty who reported students through the midterm deficiency reporting system and early alert system, feedback was provided to top administration and others (e.g., staff, director, dean, other students) who reported students through the early alert. As per administrators:

> [. . .] Once they're assigned someone . . . there's constant communication . . . between . . . the person they're assigned to and . . . any other individuals that are assigned to help them. [. . .]

[. . .] I provide data to the director and the dean on . . . I do statistical analysis of what have been happening over the semester. So . . . And, those things go up to the board of trustees. [Text combined] [. . .] I give it to her and she gives it to the dean, and he takes it up to the . . . he breaks it down, synthesizes it. [. . .]

[. . .] It [midterm reporting deficiency system] goes to the Registrar and then the Registrar then disseminates a number of reports to the campus. Like for instance, she can . . . she can separate out athletes and that report would go to the athletic director. She can separate out by dorm, and that report would go to the RD's [. . .]

Additionally, in terms of feedback to top administration, an administrator stated that an annual report (regarding EWS students' utilization of tutoring and how that impacts their GPA) was provided to the deans to share with their faculty. The same administrator also stated that reports were submitted to top administration regarding midterm deficiencies, which he/she felt did not generate action.

As per the same administrator just mentioned, other analysis and assessment data were also compiled and given to top administration but action was not taken regarding the data. When the administrator was asked why top administration did not take action regarding the analysis and assessment data, the administrator responded:

[. . .] It should be a no brainer right! I think a combination of things. [. . .] We recently just went through kind of a huge fiasco with the president that we had. [. . .] So, truth be told, this guy came [. . .] around the time I was doing all this stuff, right. So I'm passing on all this information. Well, this particular president [. . .] he really didn't have a concern for sort of like the day to day activities of the school. He had some like big fish to fry. Like in terms of raising some money for the school and getting enrollment numbers up and things like that. And so, he had a tendency to not really concern himself with things like what I was proposing and discussing and . . . And, sometimes the information wouldn't even make it to cabinet in terms of being able to be discussed. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Other Committees Exist (or Existed) To Address Student Retention.

Another subtheme that emerged during the interviews was other committees were (or are) in place at the institution to address student retention. Administrators stated that a Retention Committee was currently in place to address retention issues. This Retention Committee worked "in conjunction with the early alert program [that is administered through the Students Concerns Committee]" and "oversees the . . . big picture items and how we can better improve our retention rate." Some administrators from the Students Concerns Committee were currently on (or were on) the Retention Committee. An administrator also stated that a task force and developmental issues committee that focused on at-risk students was established at the institution after "a consultant came in and started working with us regarding retention issues for accreditation"; however, it was very brief because "the [previous] president [that was in office at the time] felt that a lot of meetings were going on, and that everyone needed to stop and go back to doing work."

Document.

Document (a copy of a follow-up email letter to a student who was contacted but did not respond to the letter stating that he/she was currently failing a course) was acquired for this dissertation study. In terms of services/critical departments such as EWS working together to share student information to benefit students, it was noted in the documents that faculty members were copied on the email communication letters sent from the Student Success Center to students regarding the early alert concerns. The letter informed students that they were failing the course for the identified professor. The letter also stated that the Student Success Center was concerned about the issue and wanted to

247

reach out to students to make them aware of the resources (e.g., peer tutoring and academic coaching) available.

A copy of an email update that was sent to a faculty member from the Student Success Center regarding a contacted student was also acquired for this research. The email was intended to let the faculty know that the student met with the Student Success Center and shared the concern he/she shared with the faculty. The email was also intended to let the faculty know that the student was asked to schedule a follow-up appointment to discuss a course of action, which included weekly 30-minute meetings with an assigned coach.

Summary.

The theme that emerged during the interviews was numerous services/critical departments came together during the monthly Students Concerns Committee meetings to share students' concerns, issues, assets, deficits, progress, etc., to benefit students. Subthemes that emerged were: (a) representatives of the services/critical departments on the Students Concerns Committee discussed students who were identified through the early alert system, (b) Students Concerns Committee members were also provided with updated information, (c) all departments on the Students Concerns Committee participated, with the exception of the Health and Wellness representative who had to be a silent participant, (d) the Counseling Center and the Students Concerns Committee did not have a relationship that included the Student Success Committee meetings and providing (or receiving) feedback/update, (e) faculty members were verbally encouraged through both top administration and the Registrar's Office to participate in the EWS (and also in writing through the Registrar's Office), (f) Students Concerns Committee

248

members were provided with feedback/updates, (g) faculty who submitted early alerts were provided with feedback/updates, (h) top administration and others were provided with updated information, and (i) other committees existed (or did exist) at the institution to address retention.

Additionally, when discussing faculty participation in EWS, administrators mentioned during the interviews that a new EWS system would be implemented to replace the current early alert system. According to administrators, once the new EWS system (Pharos 360 software system) was installed, they would be able to "customize the access . . . for . . . basically everybody on campus"; and the new system should help with increasing faculty participation.

Administrators also stated that in terms of services/critical departments such as EWS working together to share students' information to benefit students, the Student Success Center also hoped that the time they spent visiting faculty to explain the early alert system/program would increase faculty participation. An administrator also stated that to increase faculty participation in EWS, the Registrar's Office was considering using a process similar to the enrollment verification process for the midterm deficiency reporting system. An administrator stated that this process required that "everyone [faculty] has to go in, whether or not they have [midterm] deficiencies, and report [students] and click submit so that she can then generate the compliance reports."

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 2b.

EWS services/critical departments working together to share students' information to benefit students was in place at the institution (with the exception of Counseling Center and Health and Wellness Center services, because of privacy issues).

249

This included: a monthly campus-wide Students Concerns Committee and Students

Concerns Committee meetings implemented through the Student Success Center, with

representatives from a broad range of campus services/critical departments (including a

representative from the Health and Wellness Center who was a silent participant), who

came together to: (a) discuss students identified through the early alert and midterm grade

reporting systems, (b) share students' information to benefit students, and (c) track and

monitor students and their issues or deficits. A campus-wide Retention Committee was

also currently in place at the institution, which focused on retention; and on which some

of the Students Concerns Committee members were represented. Students' information

to benefit students was also shared with others: critical services/departments/individuals

not within the Students Concerns Committees, top administration, and those who

reported students, were provided with feedback. Administrators pointed out that a faculty

representative was not on the Students Concerns Committee, who they are trying to

acquire. Faculty participation too was low in the EWS, mainly because it was not

mandatory for them to participate. Top administration, the Student Success Center, and

the Registrar's Office were currently using approaches (and pursuing approaches such as

mandatory faculty participation) to encourage more faculty participation in the EWS.

Also, though a relationship did not exist between Counseling Center, Health and

Wellness Center, and similar services because of privacy issues, the Health and Wellness

privacy practices policy document pointed out that these types of services could be

involved in EWS because information about students' treatment can be used for

administrative purposes.

Administrators' Perspectives of Students' Experiences, Development, and Retention Issues

The third research question explored administrators' perspectives of students' experiences, development, and retention issues. Regarding students' retention issues, administrators were asked to describe students' self-esteem, greatest needs, academic skill weaknesses, and ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Administrators were also asked to describe why students were not doing well academically and were not successful, and discuss colleagues' shared opinions regarding students' lack of success and who colleagues blamed (hold accountable) for student failure. In addition to describing and elaborating on the aforementioned topics, administrators were also asked to describe what they believed students were experiencing (setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.) in the EWS program. These topics were explored below.

Students' Retention Issues

Many themes emerged regarding students' retention issues or deficits during the interviews. Some of these themes: lack of/poor preparation, time management, skills deficits (math, English, writing, critical thinking, life management/coping, study, etc.), and student responsibility emerged for numerous topics regarding students' retention issues. Additional themes also emerged for certain topics regarding students' retention issues, some of which included subthemes. Themes that emerged for topics on students' retention issues (some of which include subthemes) are presented below.

Students' Retention Issues: Students' Self-Esteem.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Administrators collectively stated that students had self-esteem issues. For

example:

> [. . .] Probably their self-esteem is, is lacking. There's not that much confidence there, so that's a lot of . . . part of the . . . program to help build . . . The Bridges program in particular I'm talking about. That's to kind of help build that up a little bit. And get that one-on-one, every other week, with somebody. [. . .]

> [. . .] They have a lack of confidence or their insecure. Which is . . . in, in . . . And I would imagine . . . most of our . . . early alert aren't good students. They're struggling personally, mentally - - whether they're insecure or they're having family issues. [. . .] Probably a combination of all of those. [. . .] And they're individually cased. So, one student might have 4 different issues. Whereas, one student might have one of those issues [. . .]

Summary.

An administrator stated that "I don't know if I could collectively say that, you

know, they tend to be this or the other. I think we see a wide variety." Another

administrator also stated that students' self-esteem varies. Administrators stated that

students who lacked self-esteem and confidence were insecure (did not have a lot of

belief that they could perform academically) or they had an over-inflated self-esteem

thinking they could perform academically without assistance. Some administrators also

stated that a lot of students had self-esteem issues, particularly those who had issues with

authority or specific behavioral problems (e.g., eating disorder, depression, loneliness,

feeling unwanted, medical problems, struggling personally or mentally, and/or have

family issues). Finally, some administrators stated that the EWS program had helped

students work on (or boosted) their self-esteem.

Students' Retention Issues: Greatest Needs; Academic Skill Weaknesses; Reasons Why Students Are Not Doing Well Academically; Explanation Why Students Are Not Successful/Do Not Succeed; Shared Explanation For Students' Lack Of Success; and Accountability (Colleagues' Complaint about Student Failure)

Administrators' Interview Responses: Time Management.

A majority of the administrators identified poor time management as a greatest need, academic skill weakness as a reason why students were not doing well academically, and shared explanation as a reason why students were not successful.

Administrators collectively stated that students needed to learn how to manage their time (e.g., juggling everything together when they enter college as freshman, managing their studies, learning to be/do things on their own, keeping track of deadlines). An administrator also referenced procrastination in conjunction with time management. The time management theme is summarized in the quotations below:

> [. . .] When they transition from being in high school to a freshman in college, if they live on campus, they're kind of like on their own so to speak. So then they, they have to learn time management. They have to learn how to juggle that time of, of, you know, they go to class a certain time during the day. Then they might have some free time. So, how do they use that free time? [. . .] So I think their main thing is learning the time management. Learning how to juggle all of that together. Being on their own. Being with another person in a room . . . in a residence hall. [. . .] Transitioning from being . . . having your needs met by someone else, and then all of a sudden being thrust in here. [. . .] Then faculty in the classroom expect them to . . . perform as . . . a young adult. But I think we need to remember that, it's all a learning process. You know, we need to remember we need to help them along the way. [. . .]
>
> Time management. Hands down! True and true! Time management. [Text combined] [. . .] procrastination slash time management. [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Skills

A majority of the administrators identified skills (e.g., writing, math, English, science, critical thinking, life management/coping, and/or study) as a greatest need, academic skill weakness as a reason why students were not doing well academically and not successful/did not succeed, and shared explanation for students' lack of success.

Administrators collectively stated that students had poor academic skills and other skills (e.g., life management/coping). Administrators collectively noted that students had poor reading comprehension and were thus clueless about how to read a college text and glean important information, how to take notes in class, and how to write a decent paper for any type of class (not just English Composition classes), etc. An administrator also stated that panic and a fear of math were practical things hindering students' success. Another stated that students did not have the life management/coping skills to recognize when they had a problem and determine what assistance was needed and when. Examples of administrators' responses regarding the skills category theme are listed below:

> [. . .] Just managing their study skills. Managing their time. Managing their spiritual well-being . . . which is big on campus. You know, making sure they, they attend everything that they need to. And they know that they can come to us if they have a problem. And we will help them learn how to . . . solve their own problems, and give them the skills that they need to do that. So when they leave college . . . they can do that on their own.

> I think I would say that there would be a consensus across the campus about the lack of academic skill. I think that everybody sees it. You, know, just that . . . that cluelessness about how to . . . how to read a college textbook and glean, you know, what's truly important for them. How to . . . take notes in class. How to . . . write a decent paper, and turn it in for any class; not just English Comp, but for any class. I think there would be definitely consensus on that reason. And probably that's the only area of consensus.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Support Category.

Many administrators identified support category as a greatest need. Administrators stated the following: academic, personal, and other support/connection, one-one one attention, structure and guidance, affirmation, extra help and nudging, mentoring from faculty, staff, and/or older students, spiritual/religious/other connection, mentorship, and accountability, navigating independence, and financial. Two of these responses are presented below:

> [. . .] Support. They need, they need the different support to learn how to . . . navigate being on their own for the first time. You know, they don't necessarily have mom and dad there [. . .].

> [. . .] It's a long list. [. . .] One of the most important things again is for students to feel connected. And to feel like . . . they . . . have . . . the ability . . . to . . . get help when they need it. Whether it's tutoring, or whether it's talking to someone about [. . .] "what's available for me to be involved in?" Or coming here, just coming to the front desk and asking a quick health question. Oftentimes I'll just go to the window and answer something. So I think feeling connected. I think feeling . . . successful academically. Feeling confident that they can make it outside of their family unit, you know, at the university. That they can be successful, both academically, socially, and spiritually. You know, students at this age are, are often exploring their, their own religious beliefs for the first time outside of the family unit and so, you know, they need a safe environment to do that . . . with lots of opportunities. And I think to connect with a peer group you know. So I would say those, those things. Connectivity, the ability to find help when they need it . . . to fit in socially, to explore their own spirituality, and to . . . succeed academically.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Poor Preparation

A majority of the administrators identified poor preparation as a reason why students were not doing well academically, were not successful, and shared explanation for students' lack of success.

Administrators collectively stated that students had poor preparation and did not understand that college differed from high school. Examples of administrators' responses regarding the theme are listed below:

> [. . .] Some of them just aren't prepared well enough . . . from high school, you know. With the variance in educational system from Florida educational system to let's say, "Boston." A 4.3 GPA down here is . . . might be relative to a 2.8 up in Boston, because the Florida state . . . educational system isn't as developed as it is up in the northeast. From a public school standpoint anyhow. So . . . I don't know. We feel that in our review process, that a student will be a good fit academically and spiritually here. But when they get down to it, maybe they're just not prepared enough when they come in. [. . .]

> [. . .] I think that they just need to realize that it's different from high school, and that . . . Some faculty aren't gonna have the patience that some are, you know. [. . .]

> [. . .] Some of them just aren't prepared academically coming in. And . . . which is probably one of the biggest concerns we hear from the faculty end "that this student wasn't prepared coming into my classroom." [. . .]

Administrators' Interview Responses: Student Responsibility.

A majority of the administrators identified student responsibility as a reason why students were not doing well academically, were not successful, shared explanation for students' lack of success, and accountability (what colleagues say when they complain about student failure and who they blame for student failure). Administrators collectively stated that students sometimes did not do the work or attend class, were not proactively seeking assistance, and were too embarrassed to ask for help, etc. An administrator stated that resources were made available to students, but students needed to be responsible and "take the initial step and come forth and say, I need help." Examples of administrators' responses regarding the theme of student responsibility are presented below:

[. . .] I think the ones that . . . struggle . . . with succeeding . . . struggle because they . . . they don't take full advantage of the services that are provided to them. Which I know that we continually present them with. [. . .]

[. . .] I mean it's amazing to me that students think they don't have to go to class, you know. I mean there are some that just . . . They just don't go. You know. And I'll get a note [from the professor] that "I haven't seen this student in 3 weeks. And the class meets 3 times a week," you know. " [And the student will say] "I'm sure the syllabus said that I can have 3 absences for the class." [. . .] So just, I think some students just don't get, you know. Or maybe they've been handed everything . . . on a silver platter, so to speak . . . in high school, and they just . . . they don't realize that they're really gonna have to buckle down and work hard. [. . .]

[. . .] Students just will not . . . come forth and ask for help. I don't know if it's a pride issue. Because if they see that . . . if their friends seeing them going to get tutoring, it will be . . . like a blow to their image or ego or whatever. [. . .] I tell them [. . .] milk whoever is there and draw from them. Meet with your professors. Ask questions. Read before the exam or before the class, so when you go you can ask intelligent questions because you've done the work. But some kids just . . . Maybe they've never been in the habit of going to get help. To go and ask for help, because I guess help has always come to them. So having to take the initiative and going to ask for help, is something that's alien to some of them, you know. But it's a matter of they not . . . taking that initial step . . . and asking for the help that they do need.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Ancillary Stuff.

Though not collectively identified, other retention issues that are listed below were also identified for certain topics on students' retention issues, which an administrator classified as "ancillary stuff." Ancillary stuff was mentioned for students' academic skill weakness, as a reason why students were not doing well academically, were not successful, and shared explanation for students' lack of success. A majority of the "ancillary stuff" was mentioned as reasons to why students were not doing well academically. Students' retention issues listed under "ancillary stuff" included: personal issues, family related issues, health reasons, financial reasons/struggles, immaturity, distractions students not caring/rebelling against parents, social problems, psychological

problems, prior background (lacking family support and first generation college status),

learning style, etc. Examples of this theme are listed below:

> [. . .] Then you start to get in some of the ancillary stuff. You know, the social problems. And, you know, maybe going out drinking every weekend is not good idea for your academic success. Things like that!

> [. . .] Maybe they're too socially involved. You know, they're . . . they think they're here to party, you know; or they think it's gonna be just like high school and they decide not to do anything until the 4th week of classes and suddenly they find, you know, they're way behind. You know, for others, maybe they're taking required courses that they are really not interested in. And they just think "well I'll just blow these off until I can get to the ones that I really want to take." [. . .]

> [. . .] Some of them just don't . . . do the work. Some of them go to class late. Some of them don't go to class at all. Some of them just do their homework. Some of them may have psychological issues and it manifest itself in the academic realm. And until such time that they . . . take care of the psychological issues, or whatever, mental . . . or even medical reasons, then . . . you would not see a change. Cause in counseling one of the things that they tell you is "the recurring problem is never really the real problem. [. . .]

> [. . .] I think some of them need to know their learning styles so they can use them effectively . . . in their study habits and so on. [. . .]

> [. . .] I think some students are . . . and we're talking a very handful of students. They're here because their parents have forced them here, because they want, you know, the structure that we offer. And they're either . . . they just rebel . . . or they just could care less. And I think, while they are capable, they just don't apply themselves. [. . .]

Summary.

An administrator stated the following in response to the question regarding shared

explanation for students' lack of success: "Ok, shared, that's a good word. Because

there's not necessarily a lot of agreement across different sections about what the problem

truly is." Another administrator stated in response to the same question: "it can be a

whole host of reasons. From personal issues that are going on [. . .] [to] just aren't

prepared academically coming in [. . .]."

258

Numerous reasons emerged regarding students' retention issues that were grouped into categories (themes) for easier analysis: time management, skills, support, and ancillary stuff. In response to the question regarding students' academic skill weaknesses, administrators stated that math academic skill was a serious problem, "the math department is just in a complete crisis trying to figure out how to keep up with the need for remedial teaching.", they can't staff the math department to meet the math remediation requirements. Further, students had not mastered writing skills in high school. Administrators noted that many courses and programs were dependent on students being academically skilled in these areas.

Students' Retention Issues: Students' Ability to Analyze, Synthesize, and Evaluate Information

Administrators' Interview Responses: Students Lack The Ability To Analyze, Synthesize, and Evaluate Information.

Administrators were also asked to discuss what colleagues typically say about students' ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. An administrator stated that "there is a multitude of answers to that question. It's not just one trend we see." However, the main theme that emerged was students lacked the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. As per administrators: students can't do it, they don't know how to do that, it's pretty low, some come very needy, and students struggle. A few administrators also stated that in some areas students were better at analyzing than others, some were capable of keeping track of what they needed to do and some continually needed reminding; and for the most part they could comprehend, but it was situation specific. Examples of administrators' responses are presented below:

[. . .] Most of the time I think they . . . it's pretty low. They . . . you know, they're not . . . Some areas are better at analyzing maybe, and some they're not. So I think some of those . . . Even some of the good students, like I said before, it's a new . . . it's a big adjustment for them for college. Some of those that you mentioned may be higher than others. To think analytically, we want them to think like that. We want them to think outside the box. And maybe some of them have or never had that. [. . .]

[. . .] Some are able to do it . . . on their own with little help. Some need a lot of help. Because some of them have not [been] in the habit of that synthesizing that information, and correlating of ideas, you find that they struggle. But they are willing to learn. And they are open to ideas. So some . . . we've had that some . . . Some are able to learn, because they have been trained well. They have the discipline. [. . .] Like other colleges, some come, some come very needy. [. . .] You have to really walk them through.

Summary.

The theme that emerged regarding students' ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information was students too often lacked these abilities. An administrator stated that "the ones that struggle [with analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information] are the ones that are on that list [the early alert list], you know. And sometimes they can't synthesize at all; or haven't learned to." Another administrator stated that "there are situations where I've had conversations with faculty members that say, this student just don't get it! They don't comprehend what I'm trying to tell them, both on a personal level, but also on an academic level." The administrator further stated, "for the most part [. . .] they're aware. But they just . . . sometimes they don't care" and do not want help. This administrator also stated that students have to be "[willing] to change, and adjust, and adapt to new . . . to get acclimated to new environment."

Students' Retention Issues: Accountability (Blame For Student Failure)

Administrators were also asked to discuss who their colleagues blamed for student failure. The main theme that emerged was the blame for student failure was not pointed in any specific direction.

Administrators' Interview Responses: Blame Is Not Pointed In Any Specific Direction.

As per administrators: "I wouldn't . . . say that they really blame anyone", "I don't know that there's much pointing of blame", "I don't think we blame each other", and "it seems to me . . . that . . . people here really jump through hoops trying to . . . get students to connect and to come in. But I don't know where they finally place the blame." An example of an administrator's response is listed below:

> [. . .] I don't know that there's much pointing of blame. I mean, sometimes it falls back on admissions if they know test scores. But for the most part it's just . . . the student itself just wasn't ready. So there's no like . . . It's I guess, put back on the student. It's not . . . I think we're pretty close knit group here, both faculty and staff. So I don't think there's any tension between us. You know, I wouldn't say "a student failed . . . [a course] because this professor was teaching it." Likewise, they wouldn't say "this student failed . . . [a course] because . . . [I] brought in a 1020 SAT [student] instead of a 1050." So I, I . . . I don't know that there's a real answer to that question. I, I think . . . the answer would probably be "it's just the students' preparedness." "Just wasn't ready."

An administrator also stated that "we all have a hand in this" when asked what colleagues usually said when they complained about student failure and who they blamed. The administrator also stated during discussion of services offered frequently at the university that "I see it as a combination of responsibilities from different areas" to retain students. These comments are presented in one of the administrator's responses below:

No. I think . . . we all have a hand in this. [. . .] We could bring the thing to you. And if you don't eat it, then you won't get nourishment. It's not for a lack of…not having the resources. It matters, "are you going to take the initial step and come forth and say, I need help." Because faculty . . . some faculty make themselves available . . . to tutor students even if they don't have to do that . . . because they have the other . . . But they make themselves available to students' issues and avail themselves to tutoring. Some students just don't go to tutoring. So . . . Because we have to make them responsible. This is your responsibility. We put in place things here for you. Now, come and get it, because it's there for you. [. . .]

Summary.

In terms of who administrators stated their colleagues blamed (held accountable) for student failure, the main theme that emerged was the blame for student failure was not pointed in any specific direction. Administrators stated that it was "a combination of responsibilities from different areas" and "everyone [faculty, staff, and students, etc.] has a hand" in retaining students. Administrators also referenced student responsibility when asked to describe what their colleagues said when complaining about student failure.

Students' EWS Experience and Students' Learning and Development.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

As noted above, students entered college with numerous retention issues/deficits, including: self-esteem, poor preparation, skills (academic and other skills), inability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, time management, and psychological/social issues. This is summarized in the following quotation:

[. . .] It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that our students are coming to college wholefully inequipped to . . . to . . . manage at the college level. You know, their writing skills, their math skills . . . But more concerning to me than even math and writing, is their . . . life management skills. You know the ability to deal with adversity; to push through obstacles [. . .] They don't have them [. . .] in large numbers.

In terms of academic skills (math, writing, English, and science), administrators also collectively stated that students lack pertinent academic skills when they leave high school and enter college. For example, regarding math and English academic skills as the greatest academic skill weaknesses, an administrator stated, which was also echoed by many administrators, "we have a serious problem with math" and the "math department is just in a complete crisis trying to figure out how to keep up with the need for remedial teaching." The administrator further stated that they cannot staff the math department "well enough to meet the needs of students coming in with a math remediation requirement" and "we haven't yet developed a system for on campus here, to have . . . placement testing them. So we're right now, just kinda going off of their achievement testing scores, which is not the ideal way to do it." The same administrator also went on to further state that "the biggest problem was [students] coming in with low scores and then not doing well. Yeah, the failure rate is really high. Even for pre-algebra [which students with math remediation needs have to take]", "when it comes to math, we're . . . we're not . . . we're not addressing the need."

Writing Developmental Needs. An administrator stated that in terms of addressing students' writing developmental needs, they were in a better position because they had a really good Writing Center where students "can really get some solid help with their writing skills." The administrator also stated that some professors in the Writing and Language departments also had a solid understanding of developmental education, which was also echoed by other administrators interviewed. Students' writing developmental needs are summarized in the quotation below:

Writing, we're in a better position. We have a really good Writing Center. And so students can really get some solid help with their writing skills through that. I think that's good. We also have some professors in the . . . in the language department that really understand developmental education. Developmental education is very different than typical college instruction. It's a whole different approach. It's a specialty onto itself. [. . .] With writing, we do. We have some really good strong . . . professors who understand that. Understand how to approach it. [. . .]

An administrator, however, stated when discussing a developmental proposal sent to the cabinet that there was little in terms of developmental reading comprehension, and only a workshop existed to address the issue:

> [. . .] Then there's reading. We haven't even . . . we don't even . . . we don't, we don't measure. We don't look at their reading scores. We don't place them according to their reading scores. We have very little in terms of reading comprehension. We offer one workshop, usually in the fall on reading comprehension. That's it! And that's a huge problem. [. . .]

Math Developmental Needs. In terms of math developmental needs stated an administrator, "we, do not have a single math professor who has a good understanding of developmental education." Further, the administrator noted, "we as a school have not really looked at [. . .] [students' math developmental needs] as a separate issue that we need to commit to, and commit; and know what we are doing." An administrator's response supporting this is noted below:

> [. . .] Nothing really on the math side, except for tutoring. We offer tutoring for math. But I think it has to be much more comprehensive; and there is a proposal that is sort of going through the channels right now for developmental education, because we as a school have not really looked at this as a separate issue that we need to commit to, and commit; and know what we are doing. We kind of just say, oh we'll offer pre-algebra and think that . . . that's enough. And so, there's a proposal through right now that would give us a full-time developmental math person, [and] a full-time developmental language person. [. . .] [Text combined] [. . .] We do not have a single math professor who has a good understanding of developmental education. [. . .] Cause half the time, especially with math, it's a complete fear and lack of confidence that they can do it. [. . .] On the math side, we are nowhere near where we need to be in terms of meeting the need.

An administrator who stated that math was the greatest academic skill weakness "regardless of how well they did on their SAT or ACT" also stated that "we utilize the Smart-thinking.com, we have tutors on campus . . . and the whole academic support system [to help students with math developmental needs]. But also our faculty in the school of math, or even in the school of sciences, are readily available and accessible." When an administrator who stated that "when it comes to math [. . .] we're not addressing the need" was asked if the faculty was receptive to doing developmental work with students, the administrator's response to the probing question was:

> No! No, no, "I chose a teaching college. Where are these high school children coming from." [The administrator answered this question with a laugh]. And so, I think there is . . . is some resentment sometimes towards admissions, you know. Are they so concerned with numbers that they're just taking anybody that comes off the street, and these students are clearly not college material, you know. So there is some backlash. And, I think that's why I've been pushing and pushing for at least a year, that you have to have people who specialize in this. You can't take your standard college professor and tell them "here come teach this developmental class." It just doesn't work! I mean, unless it's a very special kind of person who really gets it. Nine times out of ten a college faculty person is not going to want to teach that first of all. And so already they are resentful! And two, even if they don't mind teaching it, oftentimes they don't quite understand how to approach the material differently than they would with their normal college classes. So yeah, there's definitely a push back from the faculty on that.

Document.

Documents (a spreadsheet of the fall 2010 provisional students' math performance, and a pie charts of these students' math performance results) were acquired for this research. These documents supported the administrator claims that math and English were among students' greatest academic skills weaknesses. The spreadsheet included, among other things, students' high school freshman to senior year math courses and grades, SAT and/or ACT totals for each subject area, high school GPA,

provision/remediation courses, math score and grade in the courses students were enrolled in for Fall 2010, and academic distress status (e.g., warning, probation, or suspension). The documents showed that 26 (20%) of the current provisional admit students were admitted below college level math on the ACT/SAT and 78 (80%) were admitted below pre-algebra level math on the ACT/SAT. In terms of actual math performance, 59 (39%) of the 151 students enrolled in a math course failed. Additionally, in terms of general academic status, the documents stated that 33 (31%) of these students were in academic distress.

The proposal document (best-practices based recommendations for developmental education at the institution sent to the cabinet) was acquired for this research. This document also supported the claims made by administrators that math and English were among students' greatest academic skills weaknesses. In addition to establishing admissions requirements (e.g., achievement testing cutoffs, placement testing for students who fall below the achievement testing cutoffs), the proposal also recommended: (a) offering a reading comprehension remediation course or refuse admissions to students who do not test at a college level for reading comprehension, (b) establishing a community college referral procedure for students who fell below the institution's remediation level or developing multiple levels of remediation courses for each subject, (c) establishing a student contract with consequences for non-compliance and requiring students with remediation requirements sign the contract.

In addition, the proposal also recommended hiring a full-time specialist to manage developmental education, which would include the following: (a) overseeing placement testing and providing academic advising, (b) tracking developmental student

266

data such as grades (e.g., data regarding student, subject, and professor), (c) identifying

patterns in success and failure by stratifying data via demographic categories, (d)

conducting student (and developmental instructors) focus groups to assess what was and

was not working, (e) assessing student learning using learning artifacts from each class

section, (f) enforcing the remediation contract requirements, (g) facilitating training for

developmental instructors each semester, especially as it pertained to guiding students

through the process (e.g., skills needed to accomplish tasks) and not simply doing product

assessment, (h) facilitating regular developmental instructors meetings to discuss

remediation students and share practices, (i) teaching the FYE section for students with

one remediation requirement, and (j) identifying students with both remediation who

would go into the Bridges FYE. The proposal also recommended requiring students to

attend the academic workshops, utilize tutoring/coaching sessions, utilize the Writing

Center as part of their class grades, and developing a separate admissions process for the

Bridges program.

Summary.

As noted during the interviews and the documents listed above, students too often

lacked pertinent academic and time management skills and the ability to analyze,

synthesize, and evaluate information, possessed either too little or too much self-esteem,

and had poor preparation for success in college.

An administrator stated during the interviews that a task force committee that

focused on at-risk students and developmental issues was implemented at the institution

with the previous president; however, it was very brief. In terms of things currently in

place to address students' math and English developmental needs, administrators

collectively stated that "nothing really on the math side, except tutoring" and nothing

"other than just the workshops." Administrators who mentioned things currently in place

to address students' math needs stated the following subthemes: smarthinking.com,

tutoring, and academic support. Administrators who mentioned things currently in place

to address students' English (writing) needs stated the following subthemes: the Writing

Center/Lab and Writing and Language Department faculty. In terms of developmental

reading, an administrator stated that with the exception of a workshop in the beginning of

the fall semester little existed to address this need. Documents supported the claims

made by administrators that students' greatest academic skills weaknesses were math and

English. Additionally, the proposal document (best-practices based recommendations for

developmental education at the institution) proposed establishing admissions requirement

(as well as other things) for remediation/developmental education.

Students' Experience in the EWS Program

> **Administrators' Interview Responses: Students' Experience in the EWS**
>
> **(Setting, Feelings, and Reactions, Etc.).**
>
> ***Students' EWS Experience Is Positive.***

In terms of students' experience in the program (e.g., the setting), an administrator

stated that "we get a variety of reactions." Administrators collectively stated that

students' EWS experience was positive as students were appreciative of the program and

the help. A few examples of administrator responses are listed below:

> I think most of them are appreciative of it. I think . . . they…are glad that there's
> the help. And that . . . you know, that there is an early alert system in place too.
> That early alert system is in place. Cause I've not heard anybody . . . you know,

268

say anything negative about it. We've even talked to several parents that have used the early alert system, that maybe they've talked to their student . . . son or daughter, and they're concerned. So then we've had to have some intervention with their resident director. Student doesn't . . . fit in socially. So there's a lot of things that's with the academic side of it. But with the social side of it as well. So, yeah, I think that they . . . I think they realize it's there. It's just . . . and the ones that have utilized those services, you know, it helps them.

[. . .] I would say that it's mostly positive. I mean I haven't really heard of anyone . . . students are just adamant that we're not helpful [. . .]

Students Are Not Aware They Are In The EWS Program.

Administrators also stated in terms of students' EWS experience that students were unaware they were in the program. This theme is summarized by the quotation below:

Well, I don't think students are aware that they are on the early alert list. I think that the ones who are on academic warning or that sort of thing, they obviously know that they are. I mean . . . I don't know. I haven't actually ever had a student say to me, in my setting, "you know I'm on academic warning and it's just causing me a lot of stress or . . . " I don't think that's ever come up. [. . .]

An administrator stated that "I think that how the student is referred is really key to how they react." The administrator also went on to further state that those who referred students through the system were encouraged to tell students that they had referred them because "if they try the whole secret thing and send in the name [through the early alert system] [. . .], then we're gonna not have a very positive reaction from the student."

Examples of Students' Experiences in EWS.

An administrator provided an example of student's experience in the EWS program when he/she was describing his/her own experience in the EWS program. This student was admitted to the Bridges program because he had both a language and math

remediation need. He later had family issues and experienced stress and frustration

associated with the issue, and was resourceful when he reached out for help to address the

situation. Another administrator also described a student's EWS experience when he/she

was responding to another interview question. This student was not doing well in her

course, was on the early alert radar in the past, and had mental problems. Examples of

these students' experiences are quoted below:

> She came in, in regards to . . . her courses. She's very close to graduation. And . .
> . she . . . she's a student that has . . . that I was aware of from before. That I've
> spoken about before. She had already had an early alert. She was already on the
> radar essentially for the whole committee (all the different departments). And
> working with her with different mental problems. And getting help for that. So
> we knew that she was already . . . on medication . . . and things like that. And,
> seeking counseling treatment help through the Health and Wellness Office. She
> came in . . . on that particular day very frustrated about . . . a . . . class that she
> was enrolled in. And felt that she couldn't handle taking that class along with the
> other classes that she was enrolled in for the semester. But needed to find a way
> to either withdraw from it, or . . . and take it a different semester, or just finding,
> finding the best way of "what should I do in this situation? Should I withdraw?
> How is it gonna affect my grade?" So she was asking lots of questions like that.
>   So . . . I encouraged her by . . . first . . . approaching her professor. And
> she mentioned . . . not submitting some assignments. She mentioned just having
> difficulty juggling all the course work. So, I mentioned talking to her advisor
> about getting an extension on the assignments. Talking to the department as well
> . . . about maybe taking the class at a different time and if that would be in her
> best interest for where she's at in the program. That . . . They could give more
> specific information than I could about course content of what is going to be
> offered in the summer versus what's offered now. And . . . also referred her to the
> Student Success Office because they have, like I said, the academic coaches that
> they assign. I know that faculty, and sometimes I believe even students, work
> with other students. It's kind of like buddy system. Where they can receive help.
> And also just having her talk to her classmates too about . . . well, what
> techniques are they using. Talk to them about . . . getting help and having them
> help advise you on your course work, and that type of thing.
>   And during the conversation too she became very distraught. It was kind
> of like a night and day experience with her. Where, before she just seemed kind
> of . . . out of it. Didn't want to talk about it. Was very frustrated too. Crying and
> sobbing. And then telling me that her medication wasn't working and she didn't
> know what to do and she was very stressed and . . . She had an appointment with
> Health and Wellness [Center], but they weren't sure if could help her. So, at that

point ended the conversation and told her that she needed to go to Health and Wellness [Center] right now. And make sure that she talks to her doctor about . . . getting help for her treatment. So that way she would be more clear minded. Cause you could tell she was really struggling with . . . with what she was experiencing in her class work. And that . . . after then, and then she should go to her advisor. And then she can also come back and talk to me as well about what to do about her class schedule; and that we would both together, help her find a solution that would be in her best interest.

[Text combined] It's something relatively recent. She hasn't come back into my office specifically. But I know that she has been in contact with [the] Student Success [Center]. And she's also been in contact with her advisor. But like I said, as far as, as far as that goes, they wouldn't necessarily report back to me. They would report back to [the] Student Success [Center] with their follow up. And then, in the meetings from then forward, that's when if another issue arose, then that would be brought to our attention at [the] Students Concerns [Committee]. But . . . they wouldn't necessarily report to me directly.

[. . .] Those [retention issues or deficits] can be overcome if you have a good . . . set of coping skills. If you can come here and say, "ok, I am capable. I just need help. I just need to figure out what the resources are. I just need to hook up with people who can help me." And, for students who are able to do that, you see them soar; even if they came in with very poor scores.

We have students come in the Bridge program, those are the ones who are at the bottom of the barrel academically. They are coming in with both a language and a math remediation requirement. So, they have low scores in both. And, we've had students in that program who have soared. And we're talking . . . And I'm thinking [of] a student in particular who came in with not only those two remedial requirements, but within the first few weeks of school, his mother was evicted. She's a single mom. His mother was evicted from her apartment and homeless. So he's here at school. His mom has lost her home. So, obviously, he's very upset and stressed. And as the only son, feeling a sense of responsibility to his mom, and I can't just come to school and focus on school when my mom doesn't have any place to live, you know. So he had a lot of odds stacked against him. But yet, he had the skills to be able to say, "ok, I need to step back. I need to get help. I need to talk to people. I need to find my resources. Even if it's somebody that will help me figure out how to help my mom because I can't just let that go." And, he's amazing! He's one of our mentors now for other distressed students who are coming in.

[Text combined] [. . .] I think he came to the table already a resourceful person, you know. Like someone who understood that . . . I'm not the victim. That if something happens, I have to take responsibility and figure out what I'm gonna do about it. That has to be innate I think. And then, by having that quality within him already, he reached out. And the people here I have to say . . . the community here is, very, very caring. And the minute somebody is willing to step up . . . And that's why we get so frustrated sometimes, when we find a lot of

student never talked to us. We're like, "are you kidding me, because we could've helped you. We want to help you. That's why we're here." And so once he reached out, then the system activated and was then in turn we we're able to help him, by providing the support that he needed, the encouragement that he needed, by equipping him to be able to get through those hard times and partnering him with a coach or whatever . . . offering him the services that then in turn helped him to be successful.

Approaches To Learn About Students' Experiences In EWS: Student Success Center's Student Satisfaction Survey, Four Question Survey Through Accumedia, Focus Groups, and Short Success Story.

Another theme that emerged regarding students' experiences in the EWS was several approaches were used to learn about students' experiences in the EWS. Administrators stated that to learn about students' experiences in the EWS program, students were asked to complete the Student Success Center's Student Satisfaction survey. Administrators collectively stated that at the end of the semester students "as a whole" were surveyed about the services provided with the thinking that "they will give you their candid opinion as to what they think of the services we provide." In addition to answering questions regarding why they had not visited the Student Success Center, students were also asked closed-ended and open-ended questions on the survey about their participation/experiences in clubs/organizations (e.g., Bible study ministry, Work-Worship), transfer status, program, advising, Bridges program, and disability services, among others. It was noted in the fall 2011 Student Success Center's Satisfaction survey that it also included all students (freshman to seniors, at-risk and non-at risk, etc.) and therefore was not specific to EWS students.

Administrators also stated that at the end of each coaching and tutoring session, students were asked to complete a short four-question survey about their experience in

the session when signing out of Accumedia (the system that tracks and assess the services

students attend). Additionally, administrators stated that focus groups (students and

faculty focus groups) were conducted every spring semester as a follow-up to the four

question survey to address questions arising through the survey. Students who attended

programs (e.g., Bridges, academic coaching, and/or tutoring) were asked also to provide a

short success story describing how they benefited from the program. Examples of

administrators' responses regarding the subthemes are listed below:

> [. . .] I think in the Bridges program I know for instance, they do. They do get
> some feedback from them [students]. But now as far as like the early alert system
> or things like that; or people that use the tutoring thing, I thing we do have a
> survey that we give out as student success as a whole. And it's broken down and
> there's some questions about that. About, you know . . . was their experience, you
> know, a good experience? Did they get the help that they needed? And so we can
> use that. [. . .]

> [. . .] When students go to the coaching, we have a survey, a 4 question survey
> that asks overall quality of services that they've received and whether or not they
> would recommend that to someone else. So they give their candid opinion there
> as well. Whether or not the tutor has been success . . . Whether or not the coaches
> has been working with them properly, or whether the help given to them was
> worthwhile. How has it helped them? So they have an opportunity on that
> survey. Every session that they go to . . . right after they are logging out, because
> they have to log in and log out, on the system there is a questionnaire. Four-
> minute . . . four-question questionnaire that they can, they can answer . . . so we
> get a updated . . .

> [. . .] Accumedia asks them every single time they clock out of tutoring or
> coaching for their feedback. And that is consistently positive. That's more . . .
> that's more feedback about the particular session that happened that day. We do
> full survey of all student success services in the fall . . . in November. And, we
> consistently get very strong positive feedback on that. We get stuff that we need
> to look at as well. But we definitely get . . . good satisfactory numbers. Very
> strong. I do a focus group every spring, with both a student group and a faculty
> group. [. . .] And so for the focus group, we look at that as sort of a follow-up
> for the survey we did. So you know how you do a survey and you always wish I
> could've asked the person what they meant by this. When you read the survey
> you are like "what?" So that's how I frame the focus group is . . . I want to
> follow-up on things that emerge from the survey that we did and see if I can tease

out a little bit more what's meant by that, or what we can do about it. And so, that's what we do with the focus group in the spring.

Document.

Early Alert Form.

An administrator who stated that students were unaware of being in the EWS also stated that "how the student is referred is really key to how they react." An excerpt found at the beginning of the early alert form, stated that "the content of the report will be discussed with the student in order to address the concern." The early alert form also stated that "this system is most effective when you let student know that you have referred them to [the] Student Success [Center]." A similar statement is also noted on the early alert letter that was sent from the Student Success Center to the faculty at the beginning of each semester through an email marked high importance. This letter was sent to inform faculty about the EWS program (e.g., program requirements, software system), provided faculty with instructions regarding the utilization of the early alert link, and provided faculty with email confidentiality information.

In addition to asking those who were submitting the early alert form to let students know that they were referring them to the Student Success Center, the early alert form also asked them to provide the Student Success Center with their own name and contact information, their relationship to the student, as well as the student's resident hall information (if living on campus) to facilitate giving feedback/updates about the students.

Student Success Center's Satisfaction Survey.

Administrators collectively stated in terms of students' EWS experience, at the end of the semester students "as a whole" were surveyed about the services provided.

The fall 2011 Student Success Center's Satisfaction survey results were acquired through the Student Success Center. It was noted that the survey asked in addition to questions regarding other topics (e.g., clubs/organizations; transfer status, program, and advising; course load; FYE program), questions specific to EWS programs/services were also asked (e.g., tutoring, academic coaching, workshops, Bridges program). For example, when students were asked what topics that they "would like to see covered in future academic workshops," the following categories were identified: academics, social, psychological, and other. In terms of academics, students responded: creating degree plans, preparing for graduate schools/future employment, how to study for tests/effective studying in specific majors, time management, study habits, visual learner, long term/short term goals, APA citation/styles, note-taking strategies, procrastination, how to not get distracted and focus while doing homework, help with research/more research skills, and topics about individual classes that are most challenging for students. In terms of social, psychological, and other, workshop topics students would like to see included are: social networking, financial management, stress management, having ADHD and being in college, and transitioning from high school to college, among others.

Additionally, when students were asked to provide positives or suggestions on the survey about academic coaching, responses ranged from it helped me meet goals and the coach made me feel more welcome in the community to get emails to students right away and do not wait two days to respond. A student also stated in terms of positives or suggestions that "my tutor helped me significantly with editing my paper." Another student stated:

My academic coach is amazing. She molds everything to what works best for me and how to improve my weakness in all aspects of my college life. She takes time to get to know who I am and cares about me outside of my school life. They are not just there for my academic struggles but for my personal struggles as well. I strongly suggest to my fellow classmates to do this.

In addition, when students were asked to provide positives or suggestions on the survey about the Bridges program, students responded: it was too long before the semester even started and I did not like it, it helped me to catch up in the school world and not be behind, it helped me personally in my family and financial needs, school and class topics were covered briefly, it was helpful in finding out more about the campus grounds, and I am only in the Bridges program for math, among others.

Four-Question Survey Through Accumedia.

In addition to administering a Student Success Center Student Satisfaction survey to learn about students' experiences in the EWS program, administrators also stated that at the end of each academic coaching and tutoring session students were asked to complete a short four-question survey about their experience in the session(s) through Accumedia. An administrator also stated that focus groups (students and faculty focus groups) were conducted every spring semester as a follow-up to the four-question survey to address questions that arose through the survey.

Success Stories.

Students were also invited to provide short success stories when they attend the programs. The invitation to submit a short success story was sent from the tutors, academic coaches, etc., to the students. The tutors, academic coaches, etc., then forwarded the feedback received to the assistant director of the Student Success Center. Students referenced in the success stories, numerous psychological and academic benefits

they acquired through participation in the Bridges, academic coaching, and tutoring programs.

In terms of the Bridges program, students stated they grew/became strong spiritually and academically during the first semester, learned about God's plan and never-ending love for them, acquired a family through the Bridges group, and had great peer mentors who became friends and resources. Students also stated that the Bridges program equipped them with tools needed to prepare for the first year of college, prepared their minds for the intense hours of study they will face in the future, and gave them resources (e.g., people and things) they could access for help.

In terms of the academic coaching program, students stated in their success stories that through the program's weekly meetings they were given the opportunity to become better students, as coaches provided encouragement, assisted them to do well/better in their courses, and supported them with their academic (e.g., helped with answering homework questions, studying) and also their personal life (e.g., helping with difficult time at home, stress with school). Further, coaches held them accountable (e.g., especially in classes that they did not enjoy) through weekly homework assignments and follow-up regarding these weekly coaching assignments. Students also stated that they received wise guidance and advice (e.g., study skills, talking to professors and peers to gain insight and clarify course material, etc.), college survival tips, and help with time management and prioritization (e.g., determining what is important, staying on task and staying focused on goals).

In terms of the tutoring program, students stated in their success stories that through the program they received help when they were struggling or wanted something

277

clarified and learned the importance of taking breaks when doing homework/studying.

Students also stated that the program/tutors helped them "[become] successful both academically and outside of the classroom" and made them feel more confident in learning the material.

Examples of students' experiences in the aforementioned programs are summarized in the success stories listed below. Examples of students' retention issues were also revealed through the success stories:

> [. . .] To come to this school, I had to begin a special program called "Bridges." [. . .] I had slowly grown to love the Bridges program and everyone in it. [. . .] Bridges has not only helped me spiritually, it has also helped me academically. It has equipped me with the tools I needed to prepare for my first year in college. It helped me prepare my mind for the intense hours of studying I will be doing in future years. It gave me resources to things and people I could use for help. Bridges has Peer Mentors who are on hand whenever you need something. These Peer Mentors turned out to be amazing friends and great resources. They not only have their own experiences they have also gone through the same course that I have.

> Academic coaching was a little bit strange for me. I did not like the fact that I had to report to someone at the end of every week. I do say that it has slightly helped in getting my time usage spent in a manageable way. [. . .] I did think it was weird to have another student coaching me, but then I thought it was quite clever. What better person to help through school than someone in a higher class than you. [. . .]

> Academic coaching has been a very positive experience throughout my fall 2011 semester. With the help of [. . .] [my academic coach] I have managed to tighten any loose ends which may have been pestering me throughout my academic career. Wise guidance and advice ranging from study habits [,] sleep [,] scheduling and time management were all focus points of discussion during our weekly Tuesday meetings. The increased guidance with the help of these weekly meetings has helped me build a strong foundation that my future academic career can rest on. It is highly recommended that other [. . .] students who further seek to weed out any large imperfections in their lives to try out a semester of academic coaching.

> [. . .] [My academic coach] has helped me with staying focused and gave me so much advice when it came to talking to my professors and study skills. Not

[only] has she helped me in my academic life but also with my personal. I have been having a hard time at home [. . .] [and she] reached out to me and was always offering a helping hand. She also helped me spiritually. [. . .]

[. . .] [My academic coach] helped me organize my time, assisted me with setting up study guides and gave me some strategies for studying. [. . .] Once I felt like I had my feet on the ground and felt I was set up for success, [. . .] [my academic coach] was still there to answer questions I had about homework and to listen as I shared how crazy I felt from the stress of school. [. . .]

I had an extremely positive experience working with [. . .] [my academic coach] this semester. I wasn't originally thrilled about meeting with an academic coach once a week, but I am grateful that I did because [. . .] [my academic coach] definitely helped assist me in my desire to do well/better in my classes. I was mainly looking for accountability through this service. I have difficulty spending time on tasks, particularly homework, for classes that I don't enjoy. [. . .] It was helpful to have someone who was keeping me accountable from week to week regarding the different projects, assignments and exams I had to complete. [. . .] One thing that was very helpful during our meetings was the little "homework" assignments [. . .] [my academic coach] gave me for the next time we would meet. She encouraged me to talk to this teacher, and to that classmate, to get insight as to where I went wrong on assignments, what I do not understand and how I can improve for next time. She followed up with me and was sure that I did what she asked me to do. These assignments helped strengthen the relationships I had with my professors and my peers. Overall, I definitely had the encouragement and support I needed to be able to step up my game academically [. . .]

When I first came to tutoring [. . .], I was so unorganized and unprepared to be successful to pass college. When I told my tutor about my problems, she quickly gave me an answer and she made it so clear that I started to improve my grades significantly. I had a difficult time managing my time, so she had me buy a planner and write whatever I had to do for school. She also taught me to take a break during my homework and then come back to it. I became more organized because of the planner and I felt that school became a little easier for me. I am so glad that I had [name omitted] [her] as my tutor! She did a great job and she is responsible for my good grades.

I have been going to tutoring to get help in my Survey of Finite Math class. I have always had difficulty with math but have never sought the help of a tutor before. Before I started tutoring I was making C's and D's on all my tests. But then once I started going I got an A on the next test. Everyone who helps me is very helpful and I always walk out feeling more confident in what I am trying to learn.

Summary.

Themes that emerged regarding students' EWS experience (setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.) included: students had positive experiences in the EWS and students were not aware that they were in the EWS program. Administrators stated that the Student Success Center encouraged anyone reporting students through the early alert system to also inform the students in question.

It was also noted in the interviews and documents that students were surveyed (through the Student Success Center's Student Satisfaction survey) to determine what they were experiencing (setting, feelings, and reactions, etc.) in the Student Success Center's programs/services, some of which were EWS programs/services (e.g. workshops, academic coaching, Bridges program). The survey, however, included all students (freshman to seniors, at-risk and non-at risk, etc.) and was not specific to EWS students. Administrators also stated that a four-question survey, focus groups, and success stories were also conducted to gain information about students' experiences.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 3.

Administrators pointed out numerous students' retention issues or deficits (academic and non-academic). Many of which, cut across retention issues topics; and all of which, pointed to reasons why students were not doing well academically and not being successful. Administrators also stated that many of these issues or deficits resulted from lack of development in high school. There was no pointing of blame for student failure in any specific direction (with administrators citing that all have a hand in retention and retention is a "combination of responsibilities from different areas"). It was

noted that student responsibility was also mentioned, and many resources were made available to assist students if they sought help. Lack of/poor skills (e.g., math and English) were widely identified in the retention issues topics as learning and development needs, which administrators stated the institution did not have remediation programs in place to address these learning and developmental needs; particularly students' math needs. There was a little more focus on (and more in place for) students' English needs, though a remediation program was not present. There was, however, little in terms of developmental reading comprehension. The following were non-remediation approaches in place for math and English: tutoring, Writing Center/Lab, Writing and Language Department, workshops, and academic support. A developmental education best-practices proposal was sent to cabinet to address students' remediation/developmental education needs. In terms of students' experiences in the EWS (setting, feelings, reactions, etc.), administrators stated that, overall, students' EWS experience was positive as students were appreciative of the program and the help. The following approaches were used to garner insight into students' EWS experiences: Student Success Center's Satisfaction Survey, four question survey through Accumedia, focus groups, and short success stories. An administrator also stated that students are not aware they are in the program, and making students aware they are in the program is key to working with students; therefore, those reporting students should let the students know that they are being reported. Many concrete examples of students' experiences in the EWS were provided by administrators and students (short success stories, etc.).

Students' Psychotherapy/Psycho-Educational Processes;

and Students' Executive Skills Functions

An administrator stated, which was echoed by other administrators, that a reason students were not successful is because "retention, or success . . . student success [. . .] is very complex, and is based on a number of factors [academic and psychological/social]." The administrator further stated:

> [. . .] A huge portion of it is just that life management piece again. You know, yes there's obstacles. Yes, there are practical things that are hindering them - - bad writing skills, poor reading comprehension, total fear of math, panic. You know, all those things are factors. But those can be overcome if you have a good . . . set of coping skills. [. . .]

The next sections of the dissertation will explore if the EWS at the institution is designed with Perez's (1998) supporting, connecting, and transforming strategies in mind to transform EWS students and the institution, in order to achieve Hossler and Bean's paradigms.

Address Both Psychotherapy/Psycho-educational Process and Executive Skills Functions

Administrators mentioned numerous retention issues (academic and psychological/social) during the interviews. Academic and psychological/social issues were categories listed on the early alert form individuals used to report concerns about students. Administrators stated too that they were not provided with formal training to work with students with retention issues or deficits and normative assessment measures were not used at an individual level to identify and assess students' individual retention issues or deficits. However, as noted in the interviews,

a Student Success Center, Students Concerns Committee, and a "domino effect of

things" were in place at the institution to address both students'

psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes and executive skills function once EWS

students (and their retention issues or deficits) were indentified through the early

alert, midterm grade reports, etc. These are summarized in the following quotations:

> Yeah. All of that reporting is done through the Student Success Office. And then they're kind of like the central hub that all of the other outside departments go to, to bring . . . all of the issues to someone's attention. [. . .] Where students are assigned an academic coach . . . or counselor [. . .]

> [. . .] The early alert program goes into our database and then we evaluate that each week. Not each week, but every meeting that we have with the Students Concerns Committee. We all talk about what we know about each students. [. . .] And we're tracking that by every week we go back over that list and . . . determine if they need to be removed from the list. You know, "yes they're seeking counseling and their back on." And we'll remove them. But we'll keep them in the archive list. So they're always on a list. But the active list that we utilize, they're not always there. So if a situation would arise again, we can go in the archives and revisit what they were struggling with before. Whether it was failing a quiz or you know, had a mental health issue. Something of that nature! So we do track, we do analyze, and we do . . . actively try to resolve the situations.

> [. . .] Let's say [someone express their concerns through the early alert that a student] "they're not eating well." Or "they are not showing up for classes." Or "there's some behavioral problem or something." [. . .] [That person would log into the computer system and file a report and then] It's sent to the Student[s] Concerns Office. And then from there, the students are assigned . . . like a counselor or an advisor that . . . would help them with that particular issues. Whether it goes to Health and Wellness [Center] if it's something like that. Or, like an academic advisor. [. . .]

> [. . .] When I receive the early alert, then I send it to the appropriate person. If it has something to do with academic, I send it to one person. If it has something to do with a medical, I would send it to somebody else. If it has to do with a death in the family, or the student doesn't . . . is not . . . you know, functioning very well, something's wrong, maybe depressed, maybe suspicion of an eating disorder, lots of things, you know. That might go to someone else. [. . .]

The "domino effect of things" is described more indepth in the

psychotherapy/psycho-educational and executive skills functions sections below.

Psychotherapy/Psycho-Educational Processes

The fourth research question explored if EWS at the institution meaningfully

addressed students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes consistent with research

evidence. As noted in the retention issues section of the dissertation, numerous student

issues and deficits (academic and psychological/social) were identified throughout the

interviews. Many of which, may be catalyst for (and require) psychotherapy/psycho-

educational processes. As suggested by the following quotations, administrators stated

that academics was usually the most prevalent (or first) issue or deficit reported, but were

more counseling related (behavioral, psychological, social, etc.) when they were

beginning to reach out to the students:

> I would say if you look at the early alert report, and say "ok, what's the most
> prevalent report that we are getting?" It's usually academic. But then once we
> start reaching out to the student, and finding out, I would say purely like not
> understanding the material or struggling academically is not the most common.
> It's the first thing we see; but, what's usually more going on is something maybe
> more counseling related - - something's happening, they broke up with a girlfriend
> or . . . you know . . . mom and dad are getting a divorce they just found out; or
> you know, they had a traumatic experience that's beginning to sort of come back
> to them. You know, just . . . a wide variety. So I would say once you start getting
> past the first layer of the report, more often than not, it's a psychosocial issue.

> [. . .] And, the [Students Concerns] Committee has sort of morphed and grown
> beyond what we originally thought. [. . .] We realized that struggling
> academically is really the thing that we are gonna get the most reports on. And
> because when you start talking to students about their academic struggles, you
> most often find out that there's more to it. We realized that you know what, the
> academic route is really the route to go, because that's how we are going to find
> the students who are a danger to themselves or others. It . . . it'll show up in their
> academic first, usually. [. . .] But there's also an understanding from everybody
> on the committee that there's always more to the story, and that we need to be
> open for that, we need to be looking for that, we need to be trying to figure out

284

and helping the students share whatever it is that's really going on, so that we can help them.

It was noted on the early alert form that in addition to categories to report academic and social/psychological/behavioral issues or deficits, the form also had open sections to write comments/elaborate on the issues or deficits being reported.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

A Domino Effect of Things: Students Reported Through The Early Alert System with Counseling Type Behaviors are Referred To The Counseling and Psychological Center; Health and Wellness Center; and/or Addressed Through The Student Success Center.

An administrator stated in terms of the early alert, which is also echoed by other administrators interviewed, that "if there's outside issues contributing to it [students' academic weaknesses] . . . that's when . . . if the students themselves don't come to us, that's when their, their teachers and advisors [or other individuals] would do an early alert and contact us . . . with their concerns." After students were reported through the early alert system with counseling-type behaviors, stated administrators, they were then referred to counseling (through the Counseling Center and/or the Health and Wellness Center) and/or other services in the Student Success Center (e.g., counseling through the Bridges program, academic coaching) to address their issues or deficits.

In terms of addressing students' counseling type behavioral issues or deficits through the Health and Wellness Center, an administrator from the Health and Wellness Center also stated when students were reported (or come in) with psychotherapy type issues (e.g., test-taking anxiety, stress, insomnia/not getting enough sleep, poor nutrition,

not exercising) he/she "spend[s] a fair amount of time really trying to share the research

with students" and speak with them about solutions. When this administrator was asked

a probing question regarding if he/she found that a lot of the early alert students were

usually the largest population with the psychotherapy issues just mentioned, the

administrator responded:

> I don't see all the early alert students. But I do . . . have a fair number on our list
> who . . . have medical issues, or personal issues, or home related issues, you
> know, that have other stressors, that maybe other students who are coping better
> don't have. I mean some of our commuters who are on that list and are living at
> home, you know, you get pulled into family issues, you know. Even others who
> are renting apartments off campus and are not living with family, you know,
> they're less connected on campus. So I think they have more issues. Whether the
> students on the early alert list really are . . . among those who are sleeping less,
> eating poorly, exercising less, I don't know. That would be a great research study.
> That would be a great research study.

A Domino Effect of Things: Tracking and Assessment of Services Students

Attend Not Conducted for Counseling and Psychological Services Center

and/or Health and Wellness Center.

With regards to the tracking and assessment of services students attend theme,

administrators stated that students were tracked and assessments were conducted when

students attended services; however, counseling issues or deficits were not tracked,

monitored, or assessed when students go through the Counseling Center and/or Health

and Wellness Center because of privacy issues.

A Domino Effect of Things: Academic Coaching.

In terms of the academic coaching theme, administrators collectively stated that

students attended academic coaching to address their issues or deficits, as summarized in

the following quotation.

286

[. . .] I would say for our students, the coaching is the biggest part of it because they . . . they help a student to . . . navigate their problems in all aspects of their life. Not just academics. Not just home life. Not just their work life. Not just their social life. [. . .]

Administrators stated that students who were hired as academic coaches were selected from among the institution's Graduate School of Counseling and/or the Honors program based on GPA, general conduct behavior, and/or faculty recommendation; through the Student Success Center reaching out to faculty members, and/or by recruiting students who have successfully navigated the system to become mentors to new students in the system. An administrator stated that the training that academic coaches received to work with students included "how to identify maybe some psychological issues and what to do when that happens." The administrator's response regarding this theme is listed below:

[. . .] We highlight the fact [during training with coaches] that there are some who have disabilities, and how they should be handled. Because they may not be able to pick up things quickly. And so you have to be patient, you have to be more understanding, you have to break things down into smaller particles. So that they can understand how to work with the students, and how to identify maybe some psychological issues and what to do when that happens. You're not there as a counselor. You're just there as coach to help them with the holistic approach and, and doing well. So they need to report that to me quickly so that I can get them to counseling if they need counseling.

Document.

The 2011-2012 Undergraduate Catalog; Student Success Center's website, plan for student success information guide, and brochures; the Parent Connection newsletter; and the Academic Coaching manual, were reviewed to explore the role of the Student Success Center in addressing EWS students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes and executives skills function.

Documents stated that the Student Success Center "provides high quality academic advising, academic support services, career counseling, and personal counseling." Documents also stated that through a "personalized one-on-one environment, or an interactive on-line experience with a qualified tutor, the SSC *(Student Success Center)* staff strives to build professional and personal relationships with students in order to carefully assess their individual needs and provide appropriate academic support [italics added]." According to one of the documents, "*the Student Success Center's* services can help you clarify and reinforce what you learn in the classroom, enhance specific skills (e.g., math skills, test-taking, memory, writing support), or provide a network of support for your academic aspirations [italics added]."

Documents also stated that the Student Success Center offered numerous academic support services to help students succeed: (a) support services for students with disabilities such as ADHD, learning disabilities, emotional/psychological disabilities, among others; (b) academic enrichment workshops (e.g., time management, effective study habits, test preparation, goal-setting, and staying engaged); (c) faculty recommended peer tutoring and online tutoring (through Smart-thinking software); (d) academic coaching; (e) early alert system; and (f) progress reporting. Documents also stated that in addition to the Student Success Center, the Center for Writing Excellence "also provides additional [academic] support."

In terms of the psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes, the Counseling and Psychological Services Center website informed students that individual counseling (e.g., assessment and short counseling [6-8 sessions] conducted by university counselor and

graduate interns) were available if they were experiencing psychological, emotional, and other factors that were impeding their studies. The Counseling and Psychological Services Center's website stated that "students seek help for a variety of issues including: homesickness, difficulty transitioning to college, depression, anxiety, relationship struggles, eating disorders, family issues, substance use, [. . .] and more." Administrators collectively stated that academic and counseling-type behaviors were categories that were included on the early alert form. In addition to academics, report types listed on the early alert form also included behavioral, disability services-early alert, disability-on going, medical issue, and mental health. There was also a separate category on the early alert form (with a drop down box) to select any of the following observed behaviors: withdrawn, disruptive, frequent illness, mood changes, inconsistent performance, and other. Additionally, there was an open box to facilitate describing the concern.

The website stated that when students were referred to the Counseling Center, during the initial meeting with the counselor, students "will be asked to fill out some forms", "chat with the counselor for 45-60 minutes to [identify concerns]", and provide information about their history and family. Additionally, the website stated that during the initial meeting (and subsequent counseling meetings), counselors would listen to students' concerns, ask about the concerns to gain a deeper understanding of the issues, and help students make decisions and effectively deal with (and resolve) the concerns through a variety of approaches. The website also stated that through counseling process, students would gain a better understanding of themselves and their feelings, and develop and improve their life skills.

As noted in the documents listed above, and throughout the interviews, counseling-type behaviors were addressed through the EWS. Students' counseling retention issues or deficits, however, could not be tracked, monitored, or assessed, when students visited the Counseling and Psychological Services Center and/or Health and Wellness Center because of privacy issues. Though the Counseling and Psychological Services Centers' website stated that all conversations were confidential and counseling documents were not a part of the university record, a copy of the current Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Notice of Privacy Practices Policy document attained through the Health and Wellness Center stated that information about students' treatment could be used for administrative purposes such as reporting, utilization management, and quality improvement and surveys, and "we may use or disclose identifiable health information about you without your authorization for several other reasons *(e.g., research studies, emergencies)* [italics added]."

Summary.

Numerous psychological/social student retention issues or deficits were identified, which may have required psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes. Administrators stated that the Student Success Center and the Students Concerns Committee were in place to address EWS students' psychological/social retention issues or deficits. Administrators also stated that there was "a domino effect of things" in place to address EWS students' psychological/social retention issues or deficits, which were also noted in documents analyzed for this research.

Administrators mentioned the following "domino effect of things" to address EWS students' psychological/social retention issues or deficits when students were

reported through the early alert system with counseling-type behavior issues: students were referred to counseling through the Counseling Center, Health and Wellness Center, and/or other services through the Student Success Center, students were tracked and assessments were conducted when students attended services (with the exception of the Counseling Center and/or Health and Wellness Center because of privacy issues), and students attended academic coaching.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 4.

The Student Success Center, Students Concerns Committee, and a "domino effect of things" are in place to address the numerous students' psychological/social retention issues or deficits administrators identified. A "domino effect of things" for students who were reported through the early alert system with counseling-type behaviors, included: services in the Student Success Center (e.g., counseling through the Bridges program, academic coaching to navigate personal and academic scenarios, and/or disability counseling) and/or referral to counseling (through the Counseling Center and/or the Health and Wellness Center). Even though administrators were not provided with formal training to work with students' retention issues or deficits, the Student Success Center and Students Concerns Committee were in place to collaboratively identify, track, and monitor students' retention issues and deficits; and the Student Success Center also included a representative from the Health and Wellness Center. Additionally, even though assessment measures to assess students' issues or deficits at the individual-level were absent at the institution, informal assessment measures such as the early alert form and the academic coaching intake form included psychological/social categories, and the

early alert included an open section to write comments/elaborate on issues or deficits reported.

Thus, the data show that addressing students' psychological/social/behavioral retention or deficits through counseling was supported in that EWS at the institution meaningfully addressed students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes consistent with research evidence.

Executive Skills Function

Executive skills functioning is defined as a set of interacting components (cognitive and noncognitive) responsible for in-depth, purposive, and self-regulated behavior (Peterson et al., 2006; Parker & Boutelle, 2009; Rachal et al., 2007). These separate but interacting components are working memory, response inhibitory control (personality/emotional variables and perception), and correction of error when needed (Cooper, 2009; Marcovitch & Zelago, 2009; Meltzer, 200; Thorell et al., 2009). A shortfall in any of the three components constitutes a deficit in executive function and the need for interventions that focus on developing it.

The fifth research question explored if EWS at the institution meaningfully addressed students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills consistent with research evidence.

Administrators' Interview Responses.

Administrators stated that when the Students Concerns Committee come together to identify, track, monitor, and address, etc., students' issues or deficits reported through the early alert system it may also include academic issues, in addition to counseling type

292

behavioral issues or deficits. Administrators stated that in addition to time management

and procrastination, academic skills (math and English, etc.) and other issues and deficits

(study skills, note-taking skills, and critical thinking skills, etc) are reported through the

Students Concerns Committee. An administrator described time management,

procrastination, study skills, note-taking skills, and critical thinking skills, as "soft skills."

An administrator also stated that "we need to teach these students [the skills of] how to

evaluate and synthesize information," which was echoed by other administrators

interviewed. As per the administrator:

> Yeah. We haven't . . . we haven't sat down and talked about that specifically and say "ok, we need to teach these students how to evaluate and synthesize information." I think there's a lot of talk about critical thinking, but I think when that get's talked about it's more from the academic view more than the life . . . approach view. I mean, it's all relevant. Critical thinking is critical thinking. But in terms of applying it to the students' ability to succeed in college, they are more thinking of critically thinking about this passage on you know, [for example] the war of 1812, you know. So . . . one could argue if they learned how to do it in that context they would be better able to do it in other context too. So I . . . I know there's a merit to that. But, there hasn't been a focus conversation on just that. I think we tend to kind of address it from a larger view of "oh there's all these things the students don't know how to do and how can we try to help them gain these skills fast enough to retain past their first year." And that's the difficultly, is that we're shoveling snow while it's snowing. They've gotta learn these tools quickly but it takes time. And meanwhile, they are failing. And how can we try to . . . how can we try to turn this around enough to . . . to where they don't lose financial aid, because their GPA has dropped, and now they can't come back because they can't afford it. So, it's like this vicious cycle that we get engaged in.

Administrators collectively stated during the interviews that specific academic

issues or deficits were addressed through "a domino effect of things" such as academic

coaching, the Bridges mentoring program, progress reporting, the Writing Center,

tutoring, and the academic enrichment/skills/success workshops. In addition, when

discussing students' experiences, development, and retention issues, administrators stated

that there was nothing (no developmental type programs) outside of tutoring, academic

coaching, and workshops in place to address students' math developmental needs.

Administrators stated that in terms of English developmental need (e.g., writing

developmental needs), in addition to tutoring, workshops, and academic coaching, there

was the Writing Center to address students' English developmental needs.

Administrators collectively identified academic enrichment/skills/success workshops,

academic coaching, the Writing Center, and tutoring, as themes to address students'

learning and development.

A Domino Effect of Things: Tutoring Services.

Administrators collectively identified tutoring as a service offered frequently at

the institution to improve retention. Administrators stated that EWS students were

provided with writing tutoring through the Writing Center and tutoring in math and other

subjects through the Student Success Center. Administrators also noted that tutoring was

available 24 hours per day in a variety of subjects through an online tutoring system

called Smart-thinking. Additionally, echoing many of other the administrators, one

administrator indicated that extra resources were made available to students (e.g., faculty

make themselves available to assist with issues and provide tutoring). Students also

provided short stories about their tutoring experiences and the Accumedia system tracked

all students' tutoring services. Examples of students' short stories regarding tutoring

were provided earlier in the dissertation.

A Domino Effect of Things: Academic Coaching.

Administrators collectively stated during the interviews that students reported

with academic issues or deficits were offered academic coaching through the Student

Success Center. Academic coaches help with homework and personal scenarios. This

was also echoed by many administrators interviewed. Administrators also stated that

academic coaches were told to offer coachees study skills tips (e.g., finding a good study

location, using flashcards, reviewing notes and books and generating potential questions,

recalling information after studying without using books and notes) and test-taking skills

advice (e.g., reducing anxiety by avoiding cramming for an exam/quiz, praying before a

test/quiz and asking God to help with recalling the information, arriving early for the

test/quiz to maintain composure, and getting a good night's sleep before the test/quiz)

during the academic coaching sessions. Academic coaches are also told to "ask for

prayer requests from [. . .] students and pray with them" during the academic coaching

session. In terms of academic coaching that was identified as a theme to address

students' learning, development, and retention issues or deficits as they related to

executive skills, administrators collectively stated there was a link. A few examples are

presented below:

> [. . .] We also have something that's called academic coaching. And this is
> where we target students who are . . . what we call . . . they are also on academic
> probation. They are not doing well academically. And because we want them to
> succeed . . . we provide them with academic coaches. Even students with
> disabilities who . . . may have . . . need of support services. We place them with
> an academic coach. And these coaches are either . . . seniors (students in the
> Honors programs. Or even, graduate students in the graduate counseling
> program). So they come in; students meet with them. They are scheduled. They
> meet . . . A student would meet with a coach once per week for 30 minutes. And
> they'll do that for the course of the semester. And during those sessions you'll
> have things like, how do you study? Where do you study? What projects do you
> have? When do you . . . how many pages? When are you going to start? How do
> you manage your time? So, look at all these variables. And the coaches will
> work with them individually. Of course they are trained first. I train them first.
> They know exactly needs to be done. How they should conduct themselves
> during the coaching sessions, and some do's and don'ts, and how they can help
> enrich what the students are here for. So . . . they work with the students once a

week . . . for 30 minutes . . . until the end of the semester. And we get . . . They're suppose to submit reports at the end of every semester on . . . just a synopsis as to what had happened throughout the course of the training sessions . . . the coaching sessions. [. . .]

[. . .] The [academic] coaches meet with students for 1/2 an hour once per week, one-on-one. And the focus of it, like I said, is to address the soft skills . . . So whether or not it's time management . . . Again, they usually will start with the time management assignment. The very first coaching appointment, they'll do an intake with the student to sort of get a sense of what are the weak areas that the student has experienced up to this point. [. . .] So maybe they'll teach them a note-taking method . "So you never quite figured out how to take good notes in class! Ok, so let's show you a couple of ways . . . You pick one that works for you, go and try it in class and then come back and we'll talk about . . . see how it works." Or teaching them study skills. "Well, how do you study for a test? You tell me you always study for hours and then you take the test and you bomb it. Well ok then, tell me how you study? So a coach may pick apart then what they are doing and say" well, it might be more effective if you do this instead when you're studying." And teach them some things and have them try it and then they come back and tell them how it went, and that sort of thing. So, that's how coaching works. And again we hire those coaches based on recommendations from faculty to say this student is really on top of it. Is on the ball. We'll tell them [faculty] exactly what qualities we're looking for, and then they'll send us recommendations.

[. . .] So I coach them [students in the Bridges program] a lot on . . . on really being intentional in those ways [managing expectations and equipping for success], and applying those two things to this time with them. I think for academic support . . . academic coaching is all about . . . equipping them with the skills that they need. It's more . . . academic coaching is . . . is looking at soft skills we call them - - you know, time management, procrastination, note-taking, study skills, things like that. So it's very . . . that's a total application of the . . . of the principle of equipping them. Same with tutoring. [. . .]

Some administrators stated that academic coaching was voluntary. As noted in the academic coaching manual, once students were enrolled in the academic coaching program, academic coaches could use information provided on the intake form to "mandate" that students attend academic enrichment workshops. This was also echoed by an administrator:

Ok. One of the things that I do . . . when we have academic coaching, is that we mandate, and that's where we mandate, students who are placed in academic coaching (these are the students that we target who are not doing well). We mandate that they go to at least . . . If you are in FYE you must go to one of the workshops that I have every semester. But if you have been placed in coaching, realize that you need extra help. We might mandate that you need at least 2 more. [. . .]

Moreover, when an administrator was asked a follow-up question regarding the number of students who went through academic coaching, the administrator stated the following, which was echoed by other administrators interviewed:

[. . .] We have way more students who could use coaching than we have the ability to . . . to serve. So . . . and he . . . a lot of the coaching assignments come through failing grades and midterm deficiencies. And so, he'll assign a student to a coach and notify them that, you know, due to your deficiency you have been assigned through a coach, blah blah blah. And, they don't show up. So . . .

A Domino Effect of Things: Bridges Mentoring Program.

Administrators also stated that in addition to the other services being offered for students enrolled in the Bridges mentoring program, remedial classes were also provided to students in the Bridges mentoring program during their first year to "get them kind of caught up" and address their academic needs associated with low standardized math scores, low English test scores, and/or other issues or deficits. As per an administrator, which was echoed by many administrators interviewed, the person who oversaw the Bridges program "really has a lot of high touch with that population." Administrators also stated that students in the Bridges program undergo a "jump start" program (several days of intensive academic and social sessions), bi-weekly one-on-one sessions, and take a first-year experience course designed specifically for Bridges students. The Bridges mentoring program theme is described more in-depth in the following quotation:

[. . .] Those that come in that we admit provisionally, in, in this Bridges program that I'm talking about, we have a . . . when they come to school a week early, and they are involved in a program that is called jump start. Kinda give them a jump to, to the beginning of their college career. [. . .] Some of it's . . . sessions on time management, study skills, as I just said. Living in residence hall life, what's it like? [. . .] Then they also have sessions with . . . English and math. And, so they do some elementary type, almost like, writing. To kind of see where they're at, you know. And that . . . skill level. And math, as well. So they do a week-long thing of that. And then they meet . . . I think for the math and English. I think they do something every day with that. [. . .]

Some administrators also stated that in addition to students in the Bridges program being provided with remedial classes, the Student Success Center was also alerted by the Admissions Office to provide students with assistance (e.g., they are accepted provisionally and placed into remedial classes) when students were identified with red flags (e.g., academic issues) in their essays during the admissions process. As one administrator noted:

> Yeah [we alert the Student Success Center regarding students that we notice with issues early on through their essays that may have difficulty with sentence structures and things like that, critically thinking about certain things or analyzing the information, or just putting a good essay together]. We do it in an . . . indirect way. We don't throw it through the early alert program because that would just inundate the early alert. But when we accept students, we'll accept them provisionally. So, we'll put them in either a remedial English, or remedial math class; or an intermediate class. And then that report is sent to the Student Success Center. So it's, it's done through spreadsheets versus early alert system. That way . . . they're . . . they are . . . actively being . . . pursued to ensure academic success their first semester. We have a Bridges program that has a faculty advisor that oversees that program and he mentors those students. So, "yes" and "no." We do [alert the Student Success Center regarding students that we notice issues early on through their essays]! But we don't put it through the system right now.

A Domino Effect of Things: Progress Reporting.

Administrators stated that during weeks 4 and 12 of the semester students were given a progress report form for the faculty to complete. Faculty utilized this form to

communicate feedback/comments to the Student Success Center during these peak times

of the semester. An administrator indicated:

> [. . .] So the student gets a copy of that progress report form. So they can see for themselves exactly where they stand at given junctures in the semester. So they, along with their coaches, can work together to improve the areas that need improving. So by the end of the semester, it's not . . . it's not a . . . it's not the first time that they knowing that they are not doing well. But ahead of week 4, from the midterm grades; and by week 12, exactly how they are progressing. So they should not . . . they should go into the final exam, knowing where they stand in a professor' class.

A Domino Effect of Things: Writing Center and Freshman Experience (FYE) Courses.

When discussing the services offered frequently, administrators collectively

identified in addition to the academic coaching and the Bridges program just described,

the Writing Center and the Freshman Year Experience (FYE) course as approaches to

address students' academic issues or deficits. Examples of administrators' responses

regarding this theme are listed below:

> There are services for students that need help with studying. We have like a Writing Center. [. . .]

> I just think all the extra attention that's available here [is how they help students analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information]. I mean, they have, they have the Writing Lab that they'll refer them to. They have counseling. They have . . . the student tutors. [. . .]

> Well, we have . . . It's [academic skills weaknesses is addressed or] done mainly through our FYE (our Freshman Year Experience program). It's where we have this . . . it's a one semester class where students have this . . . students come to class for the first time. And we try to get them to . . . to see what it means to be a student in college. And that's one of the topics - - critical thinking (or developing critical thinking skills). Also, it's being reinforced in class, like an English Comp 1 class. So encourage them to do some comprehension and do some thought processes. So they can understand and when they apply it in their everyday life, they can now apply it to their respective subject areas when they are reading a text book or studying for an exam. [. . .]

The FYE and the English class [does a lot/enough of developing critical thinking skills]. I, I think, If I'm not mistaken, I think some of the business classes incorporate that in the program as well. But, I know definitely for the FYE class we do that. Because, I teach an FYE class as well.

A Domino Effect of Things: Academic Enrichment/Skills/Success Workshops.

In addition to academic coaching and the Bridges mentoring program, academic

enrichment/skills/success workshops were also identified as a theme to address students'

learning, development, and academic retention issues or deficits. In addition to time

management and procrastination, academic enrichment/skills/success workshop topics

identified included: combining faith and learning, knowing learning styles, goal-setting,

study habit techniques, and workshops on how to save the semesters, among others.

> We do some of it [time management, procrastination, and learning skills] . . . We do that . . . I have those workshops during the course of the semester. And then some of those issues are also addressed in the FYE workshop . . . In the FYE program. [. . .]

> OK. Let's start with the workshops - - The academic enrichment workshops. Every semester, but primarily the fall, we have a series of workshops (academic enrichment workshops) that we think . . . can help . . . enhance . . . the learning experience of students here at the college. We start up from the fall, because that's when we have most of our students coming in as freshman. So they help them with the transition of . . . coming from high school to college. We develop a series of workshops throughout the course of the semester. Both during the first half, and then the second half. So that students can have a continuous flow of support services in terms of the transition process. So we have topics such as . . . praising God through academics. In other words, we're combining faith and learning to show how we can praise God through the process of doing well in school. [. . .] We do things like time management skills. Time management workshops rather. Knowing your learning styles. From failure to success. Study habits . . . study habit techniques. And anything that will enhance . . . or improve . . . on their . . . learning abilities here. We have workshops geared for that. [. . .] So that's the . . . from the academic workshops standpoint. [. . .]

Among other EWS students, administrators stated that a majority of the time

students were required (e.g., through the Bridges FYE class) to attend workshops in the

fall semester and students in the academic coaching program were mandated to attend

workshops. Students in the academic coaching program were also mandated to take

notes during the workshop session(s) and bring them back to the academic coaching

sessions to discuss what had been learned during the workshop(s). As an administrator

noted:

> [. . .] We mandate, students who are placed in academic coaching [. . .] [attend]
> workshops that I have every semester. [. . .] The coaches will direct them . . .
> based on the initial information that the students gave when they came in for the
> first session. That may have been procrastination, time management, study skills.
> And we have workshops for all of those. Facebook versus gradebook. Where is
> your focus? This sort of thing. Setting goals. So what we is . . . the coach will
> mandate that the person goes to whatever workshops he or she thinks that a
> student would benefit from. Then what happens, the student goes there,
> participates in the workshop, take notes on issues or things that they've learned,
> and then go back to the coaches and say "this is what I've learned when I went to
> these workshops. How can I use that in my success program going forward?" So
> the student must go in there and participate and come back and say "this is what
> I've learned. Show me how I can learn to improve on my station."

Document.

Documents such as the Student Success Center, Academic Support and Disability

Services, and Peer Tutoring Schedule brochures and the Academic Coaching manual

stated that students' learning experiences were enhanced through various forms of

academic support, such as the early alert system, progress reporting system, academic

enrichment (or academic skills) workshops, peer tutoring and/or online tutoring through

Smart-thinking, and academic coaching. These were "a range of services" that were

provided "to help clarify and reinforce what students learn in the classroom

environment," stated the brochures and academic coaching manual.

Additionally, the early alert form located on the Advicate website stated that

students submitted through the early alert system were assigned someone that "will walk

them through the process [e.g., an academic coach, counselor]." The early alert

form/document had the following academic report types/academic categories listed on the

form: assignments not remitted, behavior in class, class attendance problems, failed

quizzes/exams, failing courses, and poor attendance in class.

Tutoring Services.

With regards to tutoring services, tutors were described in the Student Success

Center, Academic Support and Disability Services, and Peer Tutoring Schedule brochures

and the Academic Coaching manual as "faculty-recommended students" who provided

other students (such as EWS students) with free tutorial assistance in numerous subject

areas. Brochure and coaching manual stated that "difficult concepts are simplified" for

students through this service. It was noted in the brochures that this service was not

offered during midterm, spring break, and finals weeks. Administrators also stated

during the interviews that students were provided with tutoring 24 hours a day in a

variety of subjects through an online tutoring system called Smart-thinking. The Smart-

thinking website link stated that Smart-thinking helps students at the exact moment they

are in need of assistance through "drop-in live sessions, or allowing students to ask

written questions or submit writing assignments for feedback." Additionally, the Smart-

thinking website stated that:

> Research shows that individualized, one-on-one tutoring is one of the most
> effective ways of increasing student achievement and improving retention.
> Psychologists and education researchers, among others, have found that one-on-
> one tutoring increases student performance across disciplines, improving grades,
> persistence in class, and retention in college. Tutoring has also proved
> particularly effective in improving retention of at-risk minority students. Initial
> research at American University has found that live, online tutoring improves
> student performance in mathematics. Research also shows that one-on-one
> instruction proves far more powerful if it's delivered at the teachable moment - -

when students need it. [. . .] Traditional tutoring centers may not be open or accessible when many students are struggling. [. . .]

As per the Smart-thinking website, students were "connected on-demand *(or schedule a 30 minute appointment)* with an expert educator (*a tutor*) [italics added]" with whom they "work one-on-one" using "a virtual whiteboard technology." The website described smart-thinking tutors as college faculty, graduate students, high school teachers, and/or retired educators, most possessing advanced degrees and many years of teaching or tutoring experience. The Smart-thinking website stated that Smart-thinking tutors would help students identify areas needing improvement, encourage constructive criticism, and involve them in discussion and problem-solving strategies. In addition to receiving tutoring in math through the Smart-thinking technology (which is equipped with scientific and mathematical notations, symbols, etc.), students could also receive help with writing assignments through Smart-thinking's online writing lab.

Academic Enrichment/Skills/Success Workshops.

In terms of academic enrichment/skills/success workshops, the Student Success Center, Academic Support and Disability Services, and Peer Tutoring Schedule brochures and the Academic Coaching manual stated that "in taking a holistic approach to provide additional resources *or support*, the Student Success Center conducts a series of academic enrichment workshops *each semester* [italics added]."   These "faculty endorsed 50-minute *workshop* session[s] [italics added]" were offered during the third and eleventh weeks of the academic year, and include a varied list of topics "ranging from learning styles to goal-setting to study habits." As per the brochure, these workshops "provide the conduit for exploring modes of learning while adopting critical thinking skills."

303

The Academic Enrichment Workshop Schedule brochure also stated that "in taking a holistic approach to provide additional resources, [. . .] during the third and eleventh weeks, varied topics of education interests are offered [through the Student Success Center] ranging from learning styles to goal setting to study habits." Topics listed in the brochure include five sessions (three sessions in the beginning of the semester and two sessions in the middle of the semester). The first three sessions included the following topics: study skills (e.g., learning effective study habits and how they impact test taking and determining the best evaluative processes to follow when studying), test preparation (e.g., learning effective preparation techniques such as when to begin preparing for an exam, how to prepare for an exam, pitfalls to avoid [e.g., cramming, pulling all nighters], and resources to utilize), and goal setting (e.g., identifying goals, determining if the goals were realistic and attainable, identifying steps to realizing the goals and the resources that would help with achieving short and long term goals, and how profitable it was to set and follow the goals). The remaining two sessions included the following topics: staying engaged (offered immediately after the midterm break to help students with evaluating the first half of the semester and preparing for final exams), and Facebook-Gradebook (i.e., recognizing distractions and learning how to manage/or overcome them, learning better time management, applying more time to studies, and improving grades and enhancing self-esteem).

Other topics were also listed in the Academic Enrichment Workshop Schedule brochure, which were added to the fall or spring semester workshop rotation. They included: from failure to success (i.e., using difficult situations or moments to reshape and evaluate decisions and thought processes), reading comprehension tools (developing

effective comprehension through key skills such as thinking critically and making

inferences, and improving the ability to read and understand what is being read), praising

God through academics (approaching one's studies with a heart to serve God and an

attitude of dedication and resilience), and knowing your learning style (grasping the

different ways someone learns, identifying one's preferred learning style and its impact

on one's learning experience, and determining if a course required different learning

approaches).

In addition to providing information about the academic enrichment workshops,

the Academic Enrichment Workshop Schedule brochure also provided helpful hints to

succeeding, such as: attending peer tutoring early and often, scheduling meetings with

advisors, actively participating in class discussions, and time management (e.g., revising

class notes daily and weekly, and completing assigned readings and projects early),

among others.

Academic Progress Reporting.

In terms of academic progress reporting, as noted in the Academic Coaching

manual, students were required to obtain written assessments from their professors

regarding their academic progress during pivotal times of the semester. The Progress

Report form required that the number of tardies, the number of absents, and the grades

for each courses be reported. It also provided space for the faculty to submit comments

and required faculty to sign the form.

Writing Center.

The 2011-2012 Undergraduate Catalog stated that "a five-year pilot program

[quality enhancement plan, titled Think for Yourself-Write for Others] to enhance

learning in the areas of critical thinking and writing" was implemented at the institution in Fall 2008. As per the catalog:

> The [quality enhancement] plan, called Think for Yourself-Write for Others, focuses on classroom instruction in several general education courses. Students who take enhanced courses will benefit from consistent focus on the application of critical thought to the subject through critical reading, research, and argumentation, and on the skills necessary to communicate their thoughts effectively in writing.

The "Think for Yourself-Write for Others" theme to address executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills was also evident in the Writing Center website and brochure documents. The documents stated that the Writing Center provided students assistance with writing assignments through a scheduled workshop, private appointment, the website, or walk-in. As per the Writing Center brochure, "the Writing Center's "goal is to assist students in achieving the communication skills needed to express themselves clearly and successfully at the university and beyond." Through the Writing Center, students were provided with tutoring in a number of important areas, including: (a) English grammar, punctuation, and mechanics, (b) thesis statements and topic sentences, (c) brainstorming; outlining; drafting papers, (d) revising and editing; proofreading, (e) formatting and citations, (f) essay writing in various rhetorical modes, (g) argumentative writing, (h) writing about literature or other content areas, (h) research papers, and (i) creative writing, among others. The Writing Center brochure also stated that "thirty-minute workshops (*e.g., study skills and other topics just mentioned*) are offered throughout the week for students who want to address specific skill areas [italics added]."

Bridges Mentoring Program.

Administrators collectively stated that the institution offered remedial classes to students provisionally accepted through the Bridges mentoring program. The Student Success Center brochure stated that the Bridges mentoring program "will help students learn to use tools that will put areas of their life in order, spiritually, academically, and socially." In this program, states the brochure, "students will meet specific goals through monthly events, bi-weekly mentoring/advising and academic support."

Academic Coaching.

In terms of academic coaching, the Academic Support and Disability Services brochure stated that weekly academic coaching (free and recurring by appointment) were provided to students in need to "further improve students' learning experiences." The brochure stated that through the academic coaching program:

> Students will learn to identify and reduce the distractions they face. Additionally, they will develop the habit of setting realistic, attainable goals and to employ meaningful techniques to satisfy their curriculum requirements. Through this collaborative endeavor, coaches and coachees actively participate in developing a program for success, based on the student's needs and schedules.

In addition to the many things listed in the Academic Coaching manual, the manual also thanked the academic coaches for being an integral part of the academic support team and for "helping to inspire, encourage, and strengthen [students]" and "motivate, [. . .] and challenge them [students] to explore and expand their potential," through academic coach's actions. Additionally, the manual stated that coaching was a "teachable moment [. . .] *that* opens the door for and gives hope to the young impressionable minds that attend [. . .] coaching sessions [italics added]." It also stated the aim of the academic coaching process was "to identify and address their *students'*

points of need, recommend alternative approaches in conquering them, and hold each

student accountable for his or her education [italics added]."

With regards to the specifics of the academic coaching process, in addition to the

initial email that is sent from the Student Success Center to the coachees, administrators

stated that academic coaches were told to send a follow-up email (or call the student) to

introduce themselves, discuss the times of the coaching sessions, and inform coachees of

what they should bring to the meetings (e.g., agendas/planners). Administrators also

noted that academic coaches were told to call the students a few hours before the first

session to remind them of the meeting. As per the Academic Coaching manual, "as much

as it is the responsibility of the student to remember his or her scheduled meeting, most

of these students struggle with organization and time management. Therefore

remembering things like a 30-minute coaching session may be difficult for them."

Administrators also stated that academic coaches were told during the training

session that they must keep a file for each student, which includes an intake form, the

weekly timetable worksheet, the student's current schedule, a schedule of the academic

enrichment workshops, tutoring schedule, two blank progress reports, and blank sheets of

paper for taking notes during the sessions. Academic coaching notes, as identified in the

Academic Coaching manual, were important for accountability purposes. The manual

noted, "since one of the primary purpose of academic coaching is accountability, it is

important that you take notes so that you remember what was discussed and planned with

your student each week." In addition to recording notes for each session, "all coaches are

required to submit a summary progress report [as well as the file with the other

documents] to the Assistant Director of Academic Support [and Disability Services] on each student at the end of the semester."

During the first meeting with the coachees, academic coaches instructed coachees to sign in and out each time they met with their coach using the Accumedia system, which was designed to track academic coaching (and tutoring, etc.) attendance. They instructed coaches to evaluate the session by completing the questions/short survey when signing out of Accumedia. The questions, as per the Academic Coaching manual, "are important because they give the Academic Support office [. . .] feedback on the provided services." Accumedia system documents (copies of the screens) also showed that it allowed coaches (and tutors) to add comments regarding the session. Moreover, during the first meeting with the coachees, academic coaches provided a brief background of coaching (e.g., the benefits, other students' success), had students complete the intake form, and gave students the weekly timetable that needed to be completed for the next meeting (as well as on a weekly basis). Administrators collectively stated that in addition to the time logs, students were also asked to complete an intake form to assess "what issues the student may have" during their first initial academic coaching meeting. The issues identified became "topics for discussion later on during the course of the semester." As per the manual, the "*24 hour per day, weekly timetable will also give [. . .] academic coaches* some perspective of how the student spends his/her time, and what adjustments [. . .] may *need to be recommended* to maximize his/her time [italics added]"; and, the intake form will be kept as "a point of reference. The information provided may then be used as topics for discussion during the

course of the semester. [As well as] to structure subsequent coaching appointments and develop a plan for success."

The intake form also asked students to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 (with ten indicating that the student loves his/her experience at the institution) their institutional experience to date. Students were also asked on the intake form to place a checkmark next to (and prioritize) any of the following areas in which they were having difficulty: organization, study skills, focus/concentration, sleep/rest, time management, connecting with peers, approaching professors, stress/anxiety, confidence/self-esteem, prayer and devotion, communication, test anxiety, and other. Additionally, students were also asked on the intake form to provide "two examples of how [. . .] *they have* attempted to cope with this difficulty", "list two academic goals *long term and short term* [italics added]*", and identify what they "hope to gain from this student coaching experience." In addition, the form stated that during the first meeting coaches "assign any minor tasks that will benefit the student," remind students of their next coaching session, and inform students that coaching "will be consistent throughout the semester (except during the weeks of midterms and finals)."

The Academic Coaching manual also advised coaches, time permitting, to have students recap what was discussed during the academic coaching session and requested that subsequent sessions include open-ended questions that would "lead to longer, more in-depth responses." The Academic Coaching manual also states that academic coaches were also required during subsequent sessions to "ask about assignments, texts, and quizzes that the student [. . .] *mentioned* the previous week"; inquire about upcoming assignments, tests, and quizzes; "ask about their general health"; and "hold the student

accountable for completing his/her assignments on time by helping him/her come up with a time line for completion [italics added]." Additionally, administrators stated academic coaches were told to ask the student to bring his/her syllabi and planner to be completed during the session, give students a copy of the tutoring schedule and encourage them to attend peer tutoring sessions, and use information on the intake form to mandate that "students attend academic enrichment workshop relevant to the identified areas of need." Administrators also stated during the interviews that academic coaches were told to offer coachees, study skills tips (e.g., finding a good study location, using flashcards, reviewing notes and books and generating potential questions, recalling information after studying without using books and notes) and test-taking skills advice (e.g., reducing anxiety by avoiding cramming for an exam/quiz, praying before a test/quiz and asking God to help with recalling the information, arriving early for the test/quiz to maintain composure, and getting a good night's sleep before the test/quiz). Academic coaches were also told to "ask for prayer requests from [. . .] students and pray with them" during the academic coaching session.

In terms of required assignments for the academic coaching process, administrators stated that students were required to submit progress reports for each of their courses during the 5th and 13th weeks of the semester. Both the Academic Coaching manual and the Academic Support and Disability Services' brochures indicated that "during the fourth and twelfth weeks of the semester, students assigned to academic coaches are asked to meet with and obtain from their professors a progress report." As per the Academic Coaching manual, "progress reports are important for many reasons, one of which was to provide students with a fairly accurate assessment of their academic

standing in the class [. . .]." As per the Academic Support and Disability Services' brochure, the progress report was intended to "provide each student with an assessment of their to-date performance." Both the Academic Coaching manual and the Academic Support and Disability Services' brochures stated that in addition to providing students with an assessment of their academic performance/standing, the progress report also provided the coaches with "some perspective [. . .] in developing a plan for success." In addition to completing the progress report just described, academic coachees were also "mandated" to attend at least two academic enrichment workshop sessions each semester" and "share with [. . .] *the academic coach during the next coaching session what they have learned and how they intend to use that knowledge in their success plan* italics added]." The Academic Coaching manual also reported that "students engaged in continuous, participatory coaching sessions have admitted to experiencing very tangible benefits" such as reduced tendency to procrastinate, which improves time management, developed proactive behaviors and self-discipline, became familiar with their learning styles and using the techniques learned, created renewed excitement for learning, eliminated fear and failure, and generated motivation.

Summary.

Numerous academic student retention issues or deficits were identified throughout the interviews and documents, which may have required executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills. Administrators stated that the Student Success Center and the Students Concerns Committee were in place to address students' academic retention issues or deficits, which documentations confirmed. Administrators also stated that there is "a domino effect of things" in place to address students' academic

retention issues or deficits, which was also noted in documents analyzed for the study. Administrators mentioned the following "domino effect of things" to address students' academic retention issues or deficits: academic coaching, the Bridges mentoring program, progress reporting, the Writing Center, First Year Experience (FYE) courses, tutoring, and the academic enrichment/skills/success workshops. Administrators also collectively identified academic enrichment/skills/success workshops, academic coaching, Writing Center, and/or tutoring as themes to address students' learning and development in Math and English. All of these things were noted in documents analyzed for this research. Additionally, administrators stated that to address students' academic retention issues or deficits, students were tracked and assessments were conducted when students attended services.

Overall Summary Related to Research Question 5.

Though administrators did not receive formal training to work with EWS students' issues or deficits, individual-level assessment measures were not used to identify EWS students' issues or deficits, and remediation programs to address students' learning and developmental needs were available only for some EWS students/programs or minimal at best (e.g., provided only to students in the Bridges mentoring program during their first year, students alerted through the Admissions Office accepted provisionally and placed into remedial classes, available for English through the Writing Center and workshops, not available for math), it was noted that the early alert form included categories for academic issues or deficits, among psychological/social issues or deficits; as well as an open section on the early alert to comment on the issues or deficits being reported. Additionally, a Student Success Center, Students Concerns Committee,

and "domino effect of things" were in place to address students' numerous academic issues or deficits that were reported. A "domino effect of things" included: academic coaching, the Bridges mentoring program, progress reporting, the Writing Center, tutoring, and the academic enrichment/skills/success workshops.

Thus, the data show that in addition to time management and organizational skills, other academic retention issues or deficits were supported in that EWS meaningfully address students' executive skills function beyond basic time management and organizational skills consistent with research evidence.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To explore if the institutions in this research were using Perez's (1998) transforming strategies for transforming students and the institution to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms (learning, development, economic, and students' purpose), administrators were asked to describe factors within the EWS program they believed brought about changes in at-risk students' learning and development. Moreover, they were also asked to describe how the program could be improved or enhanced. This final chapter will summarize administrators' responses to these questions as well as provide results summaries for institutions X and institution Y, a list of recommendations for improving the EWS at each institution, and a list of recommendations for future research.

EWS Factors That Brought Changes

Institution X

Administrators collectively stated that a number of factors effectively brought about changes in at-risk students' learning and development as a result of the EWS program: (a) going electronically with the system, and incorporating the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory as part of that system to guide student assistance, (b) having a retention specialist/academic coach or other departments working with students one-on-one where academic contracts were used to help students develop and implement learning and development goals, and (c) having a retention specialist/academic coach provide time management, test-taking, preparation, and daily study routines workshops, among others, to improve the likelihood of student success.

Administrators also stated that the Retention Office programs (e.g., tutoring, supplemental instruction, and success and developmental workshops) were instrumental in students' success as they have brought about meaningful changes in the at-risk students' learning and development. Additionally, administrators stated that: (a) being patient with the students, (b) making students aware of resources, their situation, and how to rectify their situation, (c) identifying the students and making sure that someone reaches out to them" - - e.g., the system of addressing, (d) building a relationship with the students that encouraged independent services seeking, (e) and working with students to make behavioral changes as a result of students proactively meeting with an advisor were factors that brought about changes in at-risk students' learning and development.

Institution Y

Administrators collectively stated that a number of factors effectively brought about changes in at-risk students' learning and development as a result of the EWS program: (a) the caring relationship built with students, (b) different areas of the campus taking an interest in students' well-being, (c) students being fed "positivities," (d) increased tutoring, (e) a complete change in the Financial Aid Office, (f) bi-weekly meetings, (g) support from peer mentors, (h) faculty participation in EWS (e.g., teaching in the Bridges program, mentoring students, early alert program), (i) the different resources offered to students (e.g., academic coaching, things on time management), (j) opportunities to connect through campus resources, (k) students being made aware of services, (l) follow-up with students, (m) the Bridges program, (n) individualized programs based on students' needs (e.g., mental, academics), and (o) an improved early alert system.

Administrators also noted that having a committee with individuals coming from a wide range of perspectives was very helpful because it was effective for collectively talking, brainstorming, and thinking of productive ways to educate students about ESW-related services and their respective uses. These committee activities were also EWS-related program factors that effectively brought about changes in at-risk students' learning and development, thereby transforming students and the institution. Furthermore, demonstrating real care to students, doing an "intentional cycle of assessment every year" to evaluate service effectiveness and determine the services/approaches most needed, and bi-weekly meetings and faculty participation, were also identified as factors that brought about changes in at-risk students' learning and development, leading to positive student and ultimately institutional transformation.

Summary of Findings

Students' Retention Issues or Deficits

Numerous themes and subthemes emerged from the data collected from the two institutions. Student retention issues/deficits were identified for the following topics: (a) self-esteem (b) greatest needs, (c) academic skills weaknesses, (d) ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, and (e) reasons why students were not doing well academically and were not successful. These retention issues/deficits were similar across the two institutions and were similar to many of the at-risk student departure reasons identified in previous research (e.g., self-esteem; locus of control; time management; academic, metacognitive, and other skills/factors; academic identification; preparation and information/knowledge of academic rigor; academic and other support; psychological, social, and other factors; autonomy/student responsibility; Downing et al.,

2008; McQueen, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rachal et al., 2007), including the cognitive and noncognitive factors, and the executive skills subsets, that were the central focus of this dissertation study.

Early Warning System

EWS is vital to addressing the numerous retention issues/deficits that cut across students' lives (Fontana et al., 2005). EWS has also been identified as an essential link to achieving Hossler and Bean and Perez's retention approaches to improve students' cognitive and noncognitive skills and the executive skills subset (Borland, 2001; Perez, 1998). Notwithstanding, EWS was only identified as a service in one of six interviews in Institution X. EWS was identified as a service in four of six interviews in Institution Y, denoting a much greater emphasis on EWS at Institution Y. Subsequently, formal training to work with EWS programs and thus EWS students having difficulty analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, was lacking at both Institutions, particularly Institution X. This is problematic in light of the benefits of using trained professionals to identify and assist at-risk students in a therapeutic setting (e.g. Hayward, 2008; Schlossberg and others, 1985; Sieveking and Perfetto, 2001).

Some administrators at Institution X also reported that they have not seen the Banner computer software system's screen that faculty used to report students' midterm grades. In addition, administrators at Institution X were even unsure of the type of faculty referral process being used to report early alerts. To demonstrate, some administrators at Institution X believed early alerts were submitted through emails, while others believed there was an online reporting alert system. This represents another problematic area because EWS programs should be formal, open and coordinated, rather

318

than disjointed (Keith & Tully, 1993; Kuh, 2007; Kuh et al., 2007). In contrast, providing evidence of research literature's best practice (e.g., Borland, 2001; Hayward, 2008; Schlossberg and others,1985; Sieveking and Perfetto (2001), Institution Y showed a more formal, open, and coordinated EWS in that they were trained on the different early alert form categories and its use.

In addition to a lack of EWS training at Institution X, the following which were noted in administrators' interviews and the documents analyzed, do not support Perez's strategies to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms (e.g., the Retention Offices' academic services and staff and other services/critical departments were not fully incorporated into the EWS; and approaches to help students identify and address psychological/social issues/deficits were not provided through unique opportunities such as supporting, connecting, transforming strategies like coaching/retention counseling) bringing about changes in at-risk students' learning and development as a result of participating in the EWS: (a) lack of a formal, open, coordinated, and comprehensive EWS that operates as checks and balances, and (b) lack of an EWS software system with appropriate capabilities to support the system (e.g., the ability to report feedback other than grades). Furthermore, services/critical departments are not working collaboratively to identify, assess, track, monitor, and address students' retention issues/deficits to benefit students, as well as share students' information among and between services to benefit students. These methods again run counter to research literature's best practices (e.g., Birnbaum, 1998; Borland, 2001; Keith & Tully, 1993; Kuh, 2002, 2007; Kuh et al., 2007; Perez, 1998) and contrast too with the university's retention memorandum (Retention Memorandum, 2005, p. 1). Additionally, staff members were not designated

in the Retention Office (and other offices) to work directly with EWS, and only one

person was designated to work with EWS in the Freshman Academic Advising Services

Office, even though research literature's best practice calls for a tag team that can lead to

a portfolio of relations for students (e.g., Fontana et al., 2005; Hossler, Ziskin, & Gross,

2009; Kuh, 2007). The faculty is not involved beyond submitting reports, even though

the retention memorandum called for additional involvement (e.g., follow-up discussions

with students regarding academic progress, mentoring). Furthermore, while there were

numerous strategies (normative assessment measures used on a broad-based level) at

Institution X to identify students' retention issues/deficits (e.g., midterm grade progress

reporting system), there was a lack of strategies used on an individual-based level to

identify students' individual retention issues/deficits. Finally, there was a lack of

systematic strategies used at Institution X to assess, track, and monitor EWS students'

retention issues/deficits.

In contrast, a number of things at Institution Y were consistent with Perez's

strategies to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms (e.g., unique supporting,

connecting, and transforming strategies such as the Student Success Center and its

services, Students Concerns Committee, early alert form with psychological/social and

academic categories, Bridges mentoring program, coaching, etc., to identify and address

both psychological/social and academic issues or deficits) and what research literature's

best practices identified as bringing about changes in at-risk students' learning and

development in the EWS. The first was a formal, open, coordinated, and comprehensive

EWS that operated as checks and balances. Second, services/critical departments worked

collaboratively through a Students Concerns Committee to identify, track, monitor, and

address, students' issues/deficits, as well as share students' information among and between services to benefit students. Third, a committee made up of numerous services across the campus designated to work with EWS operated as a tag team that could lead to a portfolio of relations for students. A representative from the Health and Wellness Center was a silent participant on the Students Concerns Committee and future plans included adding a faculty representative(s) to the Students Concerns Committee. Fourth, numerous strategies were used at the institution to identify, track, monitor, and address EWS students' retention issues/deficits. All of the aforementioned are consistent with research literature's best EWS practices (e.g., Birnbaum, 1998; Borland, 2001; Fontana et al., 2005; Hossler et al., 2009; Keith & Tully, 1993; Kuh, 2002, 2007; Kuh et al., 2007; Perez, 1998). Similar to Institution X, there was a lack of assessment measures to assess students' issues/deficits.

Institution Y's current EWS was an online system open to anyone across campus. The online early alert form included numerous categories, denoting academic and social/psychological issues/deficits, as well as an open-ended section to describe the concern(s). Conversely, Institution X's EWS was not open to everyone to report student issues; rather, it was designated more for faculty to report midterm grades and to be an early alert system. The main EWS did not include numerous categories that denoted academic and social/psychological issues/deficits, but was solely for the purpose of reporting midterm grades. However, the current system (e.g., midterm grade reporting through the Banner software system) was reportedly better than the previous paper process. Still, with the elimination of the paper process certain capabilities (e.g., ability for faculty to report feedback along with midterm grades) were eliminated with the

current Banner system. At Institution Y, like Institution X, even though the current online system is better than the previous paper process, it lacked certain capabilities. Unlike Institution X, Institution Y was ready to implement (and was pursuing implementing) an advanced new system (Pharos 360 software system).

Assessment Measures

Numerous assessment measures were used to identify students' retention issues/deficits at both institutions. Assessment measures used at to identify EWS students (sort EWS students using strategies identified by Perez to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms) were nationally normed student assessment instruments used on a broad-based level. For example, midterm grade deficiency reporting system, early alert (faculty referral), and freshman warning systems, were used on a broad-based level at Institution X. At Institution Y, the midterm deficiency reporting system, early alert system/program, predictive reporting through matriculation data program and the Bridges mentoring program were used on a broad-based level at Institution Y.

Assessing of students' retention issues/deficits was conducted informally at both Institution X and Y, despite the call for a formal and coordinated system using nationally normed assessment instruments at the individual-based level (e.g., LASSI, CSI, MSLQ, MAI). These practices would best help the institution realize Perez's supporting strategy (helping students identify retention issues/deficits and assisting them with the issues/deficits identified) to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms. With the exception of the home-grown Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory required for students on academic warning/probation at Institution X, and the academic coaching intake form assessment at Institution Y, nationally normed student assessment measures

322

were not used to assess retention issues/deficits on an individual-based level at either Institution X or Y.

Additionally, Institution X students identified with retention issues/deficits on the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory and who did not successfully pass the inventory were not required to attend workshops and/or counseling sessions to address the retention issues/deficits identified in the inventory. Further, Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory results were not shared with administrators; and were not utilized during advising/counseling sessions. Nationally normed student assessment measures used on an individualized level may be conducted however by the Counseling and Psychological Center and/or Health and Wellness Center at Institutions X and Y, but could not be further explored because of confidentiality reasons. The lack of use of such important assessment measures at both institutions demonstrated missing an important opportunity for improving EWS effectiveness.

Numerous retention issues/deficits approaches nonetheless were consistent with Perez's connecting and transforming strategies. Institution X approaches included: (a) "ameliorative strategies" such as tutoring, SI sessions, and Math Lab, through the Retention Office, (b) Writing Center/Lab, (c) sessions with the retention specialist/academic coach in the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office, (d) skill development workshops, (e) and the voluntary SLS course, among others. In terms of Institution Y, approaches include: (a) the Student Success Center, (b) the Students Concerns Committee, (c) and "a domino effect of things" such as tutoring, Writing Center, FYE courses, progress reporting, academic enrichment/skills/success workshops, academic coaching, remedial classes through the Bridges program, and tracking and

assessment of services students attend (with the exception of Counseling and

Psychological Services, and the Health and Wellness Center), among others. Even

though the approaches used at Institution X to address students' retention issues/deficits,

by definition, were consistent with Perez's connecting and transforming strategies, they

were not collectively utilized in EWS at the institution to achieve Hossler and Bean's

retention paradigms. In contrast, the approaches used at Institution Y to address students'

issues/deficits were consistent with Perez's connecting and transforming strategies and

were collectively utilized in the EWS at Institution Y to achieve Hossler and Bean's

retention paradigms.

Psychotherapy/Psycho-Educational Processes

In addition to services not working together to share students' information to

benefit students at Institution X, the EWS did not meaningfully address students'

psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes. This is inconsistent with the EWS being

identified as a cognitive reorganization (CORE) process that should include

psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes to develop students' cognitive and

noncognitive skills, and the executive skills subset (Dawson & Guare, 2004; Dickman &

Stanford-Blair, 2002; Downing et al., 2008; Hudson, 2005; Lonka et al., 2004; Meltzer,

2007; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997; Sargent & Schlossberg , 1998; Thorell et al., 2009). As

part of the EWS, incorporating psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes to identify

the root causes of students' attrition would be consistent with Perez's connecting and

transforming strategies to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms. Services such

as the Health and Wellness Center, Counseling Center, and Retention Center, were

available and frequently at institution X; however, these services were not incorporated

into the EWS to address students' noncognitive issues (e.g., services did not provide feedback and did not participate on EWS committees). There was a retention specialist/academic coach available to work with EWS students who go into the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office for assistance; yet, counseling with the retention specialist/academic coach focused less on psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes and more on executive skills functions (e.g., academic contracts, academic skills workshops). Further, the only assessment measure (the home-grown Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory) used at Institution X was not utilized when students met with the retention specialist/academic coach or when meeting with other services. Additionally, the home-grown Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory was not utilized with other EWS students (e.g., EWS students reported through the faculty referral system and/or midterm grade reporting system). Last, the approaches used to identify EWS students (e.g., midterm grade reporting system) did not include noncognitive categories.

In contrast, services did work together to share students' information to benefit students at Institution Y and EWS meaningfully address students' psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes. The research evidence also suggested Institution Y's EWS did incorporate psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes to identify the root causes of students' attrition, which was consistent with Perez's connecting and transforming strategies to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms. The early alert system's student identification form included both cognitive and noncognitive categories. Students identified through the early alert system were provided with psychological/psycho-educational counseling processes offered through the EWS (e.g.,

academic coaching, Spiritual counseling, Health and Wellness Counseling) to address

students' cognitive and noncognitive issues/deficits. Individual-based level normative

assessment measures, however, were not utilized as part of the EWS at Institution Y.

Executive Skills Function

In terms of EWS meaningfully addressing students' executive skills function

beyond basic time management and organizational skills, ameliorative strategies were

available at Institution X consistent with literature review on intrusive and integrative

EWS programs (e.g., Borland, 2001; Braxton et al., 2007; Hermanowicz, 2003; Perez,

1998). Moreover, cognitive reorganization (CORE) processes such as situated learning

environments (academic success coaching, workshops, peer tutoring, etc.) and the Perez's

sorting, connecting, and transforming strategies to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention

paradigms, were utilized at Institution X. However, the ameliorative strategies were not

collectively utilized in EWS at Institution X.

In contrast, Institution Y's EWS meaningfully addressed students' executive skills

function beyond basic time management and organizational skills in the form of "a

domino effect of things" (e.g., academic coaching, Bridges mentoring program, progress

reporting, Writing Center, tutoring, academic skills workshops) consistent with literature

review on intrusive and integrative EWS programs (e.g., Borland, 2001; Braxton et al.,

2007; Hermanowicz, 2003; Perez, 1998). Additionally, the CORE processes (academic

success coaching, workshops, etc.) and Perez's sorting, supporting, connecting, and

transforming strategies, were widely available at Institution Y, and were collectively

utilized in EWS to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms.

Conclusion

Administrators at Institution X blamed students for their own failure because services/resources were made available, but chose not to seek out the services/resources. The question then arises at Institution X, where does the blame for student failure truly lies? In addition to a lack in at-risk students' cognitive, noncognitive, and executive skills factors (and the executive skills subsets), the findings support the notion that lack of formal, structured and coordinated EWS did not collectively utilize psychotherapy/psycho-educational and executive skills learning and development processes, may have led to student failure/non-success.

On the other hand, administrators at Institution Y collectively stated when asked the same question, there was no pointing of blame for student failure. Institution Y showed a much better focus on EWS, consistent with research literature's best practices required to decrease attrition and improve retention, persistence, and success (e.g., Bean & Eaton, 2001; Birnbaum, 1998; Borland, 2001; Braxton et al., 2007; Dawson & Guare, 2004; Downing et al., 2008; Fontana et al., 2005; Hossler et al., 2009; Hudson, 2005; Kuh, 2002, 2007; Kuh et al., 2007; Lenning et al., 1980; Meltzer, 2007; Perez, 1998; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1998; Schlossberg and others, 1985).

Recommendations

Improving or Enhancing the EWS Program

Institution X.

Numerous ways to improve Institution X's EWS program emerged from the data. Suggestions for improvement include: (a) patience when working with EWS students, (b) more freshman level academic support (e.g., the Retention Office instituting

undergraduate mentors or something similar), (c) more concentrated efforts aimed at developing student autonomy, ownership, and academic skills within the classroom environment, and (d) hiring more retention specialist staff to work with the program. Additional suggestions include: (a) improving student monitoring and tracking, along with assessing program impact, (b) sharing EWS information (e.g., data and assessment) within the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office and with other departments/services (e.g., Retention Office, Student/Multicultural Affairs, and faculty), (c) incorporating (and educating) educational services more (e.g., the Retention Office), (d) increasing faculty participation and response rates in terms of early alert and mid-term grade reporting, (e) providing formal training for those working with EWS, (f) marketing the program more and providing more resources through the program, and (g) including a mandatory component for students in the program.

As one administrator from the Freshman Academic Advising Services Office stated, that "if money were of no issue, having an office that simply followed-up, and followed . . . track . . . were in students' faces so to speak, would probably be ideal." Another administrator from the same office also stated, "however, I know that it's not really possible because of the budget; and because retention isn't really part of our [Freshman Academic Advising Services Office's] . . . mission statement." The same administrator also stated in response to a question about improving and enhancing the EWS program that "I would [also] love to see exercises that build off of academic skills integrated into the classroom curriculums." The administrator also shared that they would like seeing more than one person designated as a retention specialist, which was also echoed by other participants.

Interview results indicated additional ways to improve Institution X's EWS program. Although the EWS program was well advertised, stated an administrator, the university could still do a better job in terms of advertising/marketing the EWS program (e.g., marketing the program through Facebook and Twitter). According to the administrator, students are oftentimes not fully aware of the program because "students don't read. Students don't hear." Many administrators also echoed this sentiment. In terms of improving/enhancing the program, based on the data, it might be helpful conducting midterms earlier to allow more time for written feedback prior to the withdrawal deadline. Administrators stated that some faculty "do a midterm and final, and they don't do the midterm early enough" and "there have been discussions at the curriculum level to look at . . . having all instructors have some . . . some graded assignment with feedback to the student prior to the withdrawal deadline."

In addition to the recommendations emerging from the interviews, the following are also recommendations drawn from the research literature (interpretation of Hossler & Bean, Perez's retention paradigms/strategies) for improving Institution X's EWS:

- Establish funding and programming for EWS for first year students, similar to the Second-Year Retention program at the institution.

- Establish a formal and coordinated EWS that collectively utilizes Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms, and Perez's (1998) retention strategies in the form of a formal, open, coordinated, and comprehensive EWS that tracks and monitors students' issues/deficits.

- Establish a EWS committee made up of institution-wide administrators to get buy-in across campus. Committee members should include: (a) the

329

Counseling Center and/or Health and Wellness Center that can only serve as silent members, but can add important insights as to better assist students, (b) faculty, (c) the Writing Center, and (d) administrators from the Institutional effectiveness office.

- Implement a new EWS computer software system with the capabilities required to handle the institution's needs for dealing more effectively with student retention issues or deficits. Examples might be the Pharos 360 software and Accumedia systems identified at Institution Y. The current EWS software system (the Banner computer software system) only allows faculty to report, and only allows the reporting of grades; and a system to track and monitor referrals/services students attend (e.g. Accumedia system) is absent.

- Share EWS student information and program data both with individuals working with the program and individuals who are institution-wide. In addition, provide feedback to those who take the time to report students.

- Use surveys, success stories and other strategies to gain EWS students' perspectives about their experiences.

- Require all EWS students (in addition to students on probation) complete the Academic Recovery Self-Assessment Inventory. Utilize the inventory data during each respective student's individual counseling sessions. Share this information within and between services/departments.

- Coordinate the many individual efforts across campus to focus better serve student needs. For example, combine workshops with similar topics/efforts (e.g., stress management, time management, learning skills, study skills,

among others) that are currently being offered through the various services/departments. Finally, require EWS students' attendance at these workshops with careful attention to tracking attendance.

- Incorporate psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes (e.g., early alert forms with psychological/social categories; coaching, retention counseling, mentoring programs, etc., that focus on psychological/social issues or deficits), and collectively incorporate executive skills development processes (e.g., Retention Office, Health and Wellness Center, Counseling Center, and Writing Center's staff, academic services, and/or academic skills workshops) into the EWS program.

Institution Y.

The data suggested that Institution Y's EWS program could be improved by: (a) educating students more about the services offered, (b) updating the current early alert system to the Pharos 360 computer software system, (c) involving everyone (e.g., getting everyone on board), (d) emphasizing the need for everyone taking an interest in the students, (e) asking for more faculty reporting and following up with students, and more follow-up by the Student Success Center with other departments, and (f) mandating that faculty report students through the mid-term deficiency grade reporting system to facilitate compliance reporting.

In addition, some of the data also indicated (a) more resources, (b) more staff, (c) more reports, (d) more feedback/follow up with other services/departments, and (e) students responding. Additionally, some of the data also indicated it would be helpful if the Student Success Center took over the Bridges program's admissions process and

utilize placement testing instead of achievement scores. Lifting restrictions within (and between) services in terms of privacy issues, could also improve the EWS program because information flow is vital to EWS success. Further, immediate follow-through of the proposal sent to the institution's cabinet for best-practices for optimal student learning and development, particularly as it related to developmental education.

In addition to recommendations emerging from the data, the following are also recommendations for improving Institution Y's EWS drawn from the research literature (e.g., interpretations of Hossler and Bean, and Perez's retention paradigms/strategies):

- Add representatives of faculty, the Writing Center, the Math Center, administrators from the Institutional Effectiveness Office, and the Counseling Center (silent member) to the Students Concerns Committee.

- Conduct EWS surveys (similar to the survey conducted for all students) to gain student perspectives about their experiences.

- Continue incorporating psychotherapy/psycho-educational processes (e.g., psychological/social categories on the early alert form, coaching, Bridges mentoring, disability counseling) and executive skills development processes (e.g., academic coaching, tutoring, workshops, progress reporting, Bridges mentoring, Writing Center) into the EWS program.

Institutions X and Y.

In addition to recommendations listed above for each specific institution, the following are also recommendations for improving EWS at both Institution X and Y:

- Utilize nationally normed student assessment instruments used on an individual level to identify and assess students' individual issues or deficits,

332

and subsequently use the results when working with students one-on-one. At

Institution X, use nationally normed assessment instruments in addition to (or

in place of) the institution's home-grown Academic Recovery Self-

Assessment Inventory.

- Conduct formal training for individuals working with EWS. Provide staff

  development also that focuses specifically on EWS through attendance at

  national and statewide conferences, workshops, webinars, etc.

- Conduct EWS program evaluations (at the end of each term and yearly). For

  example, examine the number of faculty who report, type of retention issues

  reported, types of classes reported, services students were reported to and

  attend, students' experiences, student outcome, etc.

- Require psychological/psycho-educational counseling services representatives

  on EWS committees provide a comprehensive assessment of the EWS

  students (on a semester or yearly basis) to the committee without affording

  any identifiable information or individualized information. This valuable

  information should then be added to the comprehensive EWS program

  evaluation.

- Designate and/or hire more staff members to work with EWS. For example,

  administrators, advisor retention specialists/success coaches, Retention Office

  administrators, etc. at Institution X, and more administrators, student success

  coaches, etc. at Institution Y.

- Mandate at-risk students participation in EWS through

  institutional/departmental policies.

- Mandate faculty participation in EWS.

- Market (or enhance marketing of) the EWS program to students and parents during orientations, SLS courses (and course materials), student brochures, and the undergraduate student catalog.

Additional Recommendations

The recommendations listed above are designed to improve EWS, which in turn should lead to better persistence and retention for at-risk students at Institution X and Y. Perez's recommendations listed below are also designed to achieve the goals just mentioned to transform students and the institution.

In addition to utilizing the sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming strategies identified throughout the dissertation to achieve Hossler and Bean's retention paradigms, Perez (1998) recommends the following strategies at the institutional level to transform students and the institution, which are noted in the book *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Student At-Risk in the Open-Door College*. Strategies that would apply to both Institutions X and Y include:

- Establish faculty development programs "to enhance the role of faculty in assisting the students at risk" and change faculty perception and attitudes of at-risk students, through "understanding, appreciating, and working with at-risk students" (p. 66).

- Faculty "incorporating multiple teaching and learning strategies", that focus on executive skills development (p. 66).

- Establish "institutional strategies to optimize learning", such as a focus on active and collaborative learning that includes engaging EWS students with faculty and administration, among others (p. 66).

- Integrate skills training and cognitive training with students' social and emotional developments as part of students' collegiate experience.

- Select EWS staff using the following criteria: interest, commitment, and knowledge of learning problems. Based on the research data, the researcher also recommends considering the EWS staff's knowledge of cognitive, noncognitive, and executive skills as an important selection criterion.

- Establish basic skills assessment, mandatory placement and counseling, multiple learning approaches that use instructors and peer assistance, and a system of monitoring student behavior in EWS.

- Implement "legislation for programs *(e.g., similar to the Second-Year retention program at Institution X that was discussed in this chapter of the dissertation)* designed specifically for institutions to help *first-year* students at risk [italics added]" (p. 66). Legislation, that focuses on "investing *funds and/or* increasing funds to *identify, assess, monitor, track,* assist/*address,* and retain, first year at-risk students [italics added]" (p. 66).

The following strategies listed below, which were mentioned by Perez from the book noted above, are already being utilized at Institution Y. These additional strategies are recommendations for Institution X:

- Ensure there is strong administrative support and establish safety nets that include faculty mentors and peer support.

- "Student program *(e.g., EWS)* and outcomes should be regularly evaluated and results disseminated *institution-wide and within an established EWS committee* [italics added]" (p. 66).

Recommendations for Future Study

The current research supports the need for much additional study. As this was a qualitative study, generalization was not permitted beyond the two institutions examined in this study. Thus, future research could be extended to a greater number of institutions from a wide variety of geographic locations to further explore the themes and subthemes emerging from this research. It may be that the current study's themes reflected the unique characteristics of the respective institutions; consequently, additional research would be required to corroborate this study's findings further. For example, it would be interesting replicating this research in non-Florida and other Florida Institutions for comparison purposes. Instruments like a survey index could be developed also to measure the themes and subthemes uncovered through this research, which would facilitate developing and empirically testing research-based conceptual models that predict at-risk students' learning, development, and retention.

The link between engaging in the specific promising activities identified in this research (one-to-one coaching, participation in student success workshops, academic contracts, and tutoring) and student success (e.g., higher GPA, retention) could be investigated. Moreover, because this research uncovered some concern with how to best handle students with physical and psychological disabilities, future research could link these same promising strategies for improving student performance for example among ADHD students or those with clinical depression.

Lack of adequate technology was identified as another issue in this research. Research should follow-up Institution Y's new EWS system (Pharos 360 software system) implementation to examine the degree such a system actually improves the institution's EWS. In turn, the technology's implementation should be investigated for its possible association with improving student performance and retention. Is implementing technology such as the Pharos 360 software really the key to EWS effectiveness and eventual student success or can something more economical be done (e.g., better strategic planning)? Research could be designed to test this interesting notion.

Student, faculty, peer tutors, coaches and other appropriate stakeholders' perspectives should be researched to compare and contrast the themes emerging from their interviews with those of the administrators queried in this research. It may be that students or faculty have decidedly differing ideas about what the barriers to student success might be and what might be the most useful means to improve student success through an EWS system. Finally, it would be advantageous to research how and the degree to which statewide EWS policies supports EWS implementation and effectiveness at both institutional and state levels.

"I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the [prize] . . . which the Lord . . . will award to me on that day" - - 2 Timothy 4:7

"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised" - - Hebrews 10:35

REFERENCES

Arendale, D.R. et al. (2007). A glossary of developmental education and learning assistance terms. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 38*, 10-34.

Bailey, B.L., Bauman, C., & Lata, K.A. (1998). *Student retention and satisfaction: The evolution of a predictive model.* Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held in Minneapolis (38th, Minneapolis, MN, May 17-20, 1998), 1-18. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED424797)

Bean, J., & Eaton, S.B. (2001). The psychology underlying successful retention practices. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*, 73-89.

Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (3rd ed).* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Borland, K. (2001). Assessing retention: Six steps and four paradigms. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*, 365-379.

Braunstein, A.W., Lesser, M.H., & Pescatrice, D.R. (2008). The impact of a program for the disadvantaged on student retention. *College Student Journal, 42*, 36-40.

Braxton, J.M., Brier, E.M., & Steele, S.L. (2007). Shaping retention from research to practice. *College Student Retention, 9*, 377-399.

Braxton, J.M., & McClendon, S.A. (2001). The fostering of social integration and retention through institutional practice. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*, 57-71.

Brier, E. M., Hirschy, A.S., & Braxton, J.M. (2008). The strategic retention initiative: Theory-based practice to reduce college student departure. *About Campus, 13*, 18-20.

Brower, A.M., & Dettinger, K.M. (1998). What is a learning community? Toward a comprehensive model. *About College, 3*, 15-22.

Burdick, K.E., & Goldberg, T.E. (2008). Overview and introduction: Dimensions of cognition and measures of cognitive function. *Cognitive dysfunction in bipolar: A guide for clinicians.* Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric.

Cano, F. (2006). An in-depth analysis of the learning and student strategies inventory (LASSI). *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 66*, 1023-1038.

Carlson, J.A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *The Qualitative Report, 15*, 1102-1113.

Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2008). *Early warning systems that support students at risk of dropping out of high school.* Research Brief, Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 504129)

Colom, R., Abad, F.J., Quiroga, M.A. Shih, P.C., & Flores-Mendoza, C. (2008). Working memory and intelligence are highly related constructs, but why? *Intelligence, 36*, 584-606.

Cooper, R. (2009). Development of executive function: More than conscious reflection. *Developmental Science, 12*, 19-20.

Daft, R.L. (2001). *Organization theory and design (7th ed.).* Mason, Ohio: South-Western.

Davidson, W.B., Beck, H.P., & Milligan, M. (2009). The college persistence questionnaire: Development and validation of an instrument that predicts student attrition. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*, 373-390.

Dawson, P., & Guare, R. (2004). *Executive skills in children and adolescent: A practical guide to assessment and intervention.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Dean, G.J., & Eriksen, J.P. (1984). *Academic counseling for adults in transition to high-tech careers.* Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference, Louisville, KY, November 6-10, 1984), 1-28. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED249371)

Derby, D., & Smith, T. (2004). An orientation course and community college retention. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 29*, 763-773.

Dessance, C.R., & Batdorf, R.L. (1980). *Educational advising for retention: Applying the student development model.* Forum presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior College, (60th, San Francisco, CA, March 3-April 12, 1980), 1-25. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED190176)

Dickman, M.H., & Stanford-Blair, N (2002). *Connecting leadership to the brain.* Thousand Oaks, CA; Corwin Press.

Downing, K., Kwong, T., Chan, S.W., Lam, T.F., & Downing, W.K. (2008). Problem-based learning and the development of metacognition. *Higher Education, 57*, 609-621.

Engle, C.C., Reilly, N.P., & Levine, H.B. (2004). A case study of an academic retention program. *Journal of College Student Retention, 5*, 365-383.

Engle, R. W., Laughlin, J.E., Tuholski, S.W., & Conway, A.R.A. (1999). Working memory, short-term memory, and general fluid intelligence: A latent-variable approach. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 128*, 309-331.

Entwistle, N., & McCune, V. (2004). The conceptual bases of study strategy inventories. *Educational Psychology Review, 16*, 325-345.

Ethingon, C.A., & Horn, R.A. (2007). An examination of pace's model of student development and college impress. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 31*, 83-198.

Farrell, W., & Farrell, K. (2000). *The tertiary awareness programme pilot transition from secondary school to university: An Australian experience in student transition.* Proceedings of the Technological Education and National Development Conference, "Crossroads of the New Millennium" (2nd, April 8-10, 2000, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates), 1-15. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED446282)

Fontana, L., Green, P., Wright, T., Distefano Diaz, M.F., Johnson, E., Marcia, J., . . . Obenaough, S. (2005-2006). A strategic model to address issues of student achievement. *Junior College Student Retention, 7*, 201-216.

Gay, L.R., & Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Gittman, E., & Davenport, P. (1996). *Retention strategies at an open enrollment commuter college*. Paper presented at the 1996 annual Meeting of Northern Educational Research Association, New York Institute of Technology, NY. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED414984)

Goodman, J., & Pappas, J.G. (2000). Applying the Schlossberg 4S transition model to retired university faculty: Does it fit? *Adultspan Journal, 2*, 15-28.

Green, D. (2006). Historically underserved students: What we know, what we still need to know. *New Directions for Community College, 135*, 21-28.

Guiffrida, D. (2006). Toward a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory. *The Review of Higher Education, 29*, 451-472.

Hayward, C. (2008). *Student withdrawal study*. Produced by the Office of Institutional Research, Mendocino College, Ukiah, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED481626)

Hand, C., & Payne, E.M. (2008). First-generation college students: A study of Appalachian student success. *Journal of Developmental Education, 32*, 4-15.

Hazeur, C. (2008). Purposeful co-curricular activities designed to increase engagement: A practice brief based on Beams project outcomes. *Institute for Higher Education Policy*, 1-4.

Heisserer, D.L., & Parette, P. (2002). Advising at-risk students in college and university settings. *College Student Journal, 36*, 69-83.

Hermanowicz, J.C. (2003*). College attrition at American research universities: Comparative case studies*. New York, NY: Agathan Press.

Hinkle, D., Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S.G. (2003). *Applied statistics for the behavioral sciences (5TH ed)*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Hollins, T.N. (2009). Examining the impact of a comprehensive approach to student orientation. *Inquiry, 14*, 15-27.

Honan, J.P., & Rule, C.S. (2002). *Using cases in higher education: A guide for faculty and administrators*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Hossler, D., Ziskin, M., & Gross, J.P.K. (2009). Getting serious about institutional performance in student retention: Research-based lessons on effective policies and practices. *About Campus, 13*, 2-11.

Howard, K., & Tully, R. (1993). Developing a statewide retention plan. Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research (33rd, Chicago, IL, May 16-19, 1993), 1-13. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 356811)

Hoyt, J.E. (1999). Remedial education and student attrition. *Community College Review, 27*, 51-72.

Hudson, W.E. (2005). Can an early alert excessive absenteeism warning system be effective in retaining freshman students? *Journal of College Student Retention, 7*, 217-226.

Humphrey, E. (2006). Project success: Helping probationary students achieve academic success. *Journal of College Student Retention, 7*, 147-163.

Hunziker, C.M. (1984). *Evaluation of the individualized study program early warning system.* California University, Davis Office of Student Affairs Research and Information, 1-16. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED256276)

Kenny, M.E. et al. (2002). *Learning to serve: Promoting civil society through service learning.* Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic.

Keup, J.R. (2005-2006). The impact of curricular interventions on intended second year re-enrollment. *Junior College Student Retention, 7*, 61-89.

Kinzie, J. (2009). *A wide range of colleges and universities gains in effective educational practices, survey finds*. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Bloomington, IN.

Kinzie, J., Gonyea, R., Shoup, R., & Kuh, G.D. (2008). Promoting persistence and success of underrepresented students: Lessons for teaching and learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 115*, 21-35.

Kiser, A.I.T., & Price, L. (2007-2008). The persistence of college students from their freshman to sophomore year. *Journal of College Student Retention, 9*, 421-436.

Kuh, G. (2002). Organizational culture and student persistence: Prospects and puzzles. *Journal of College Student Development: Research, Theory, and Practice, 3*, 23-39.

Kuh, G. (2007). How to help students achieve. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 53*, B12.

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J.A., Bridges, B.K., & Hayek, J.C. (2007). Piecing together the student success puzzle: Research, propositions, and recommendations. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 32*, 1-182.

Lang, M. (2001). Student retention in higher education: Some conceptual and programmatic perspectives. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*, 217-227.

LASSI in Action (2009). Retrieved August, 2, 2009, from http://www.hhpublishing.com/_assessments/LASSI/uses.html

Latzman, R.D., Elkovitch, N., Young, J., & Clark, L.A., (2010). The contribution of executive functioning to academic achievement among male adolescents. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology, 32*, 455-462.

Lenning, O. et al. (1980). *Student retention strategies* (Report No. 8, 1980). AAHE-Eric/Higher Education American Association for Higher Education, Washington, DC. Eric Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington D.C. Institute of Education (ED). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED200118)

Lonka, K., Olkinuora, E., & Makinen, J. (2004). Aspects and prospects of measuring studying and learning in higher education. *Educational Psychology Review, 16*, 301-323.

Madden, S.J. (2000). *Service learning across the curriculum: Case applications in higher education.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Mann, J.R., Hunt, M.D., & Alford, J.G. (2004). Monitored probation: A program that works. *Journal of College Student Retention. 5*, 245-254.

Marcovitch, S., & Zelago, P. (2009). A hierarchical competing systems model of the emergence and early development of executive function. *Developmental Science, 12*, 1-18.

McAtee, A.B., & Benshoff, J.M. (2006). Rural dislocated women in career transition: The importance of supports and strategies. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 30*, 697-714.

McConnell, P. (2000). What community colleges should do to assist first-generation students. *Community College Review, 28*, 75-87.

McQueen, H. (2009). Integration and regulation matters in educational transition: A theoretical critique of retention and attrition models. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 57*, 70-88.

Meltzer, L. (2007). *Executive function in education.* New York, NY: The Gulford Press.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Metz, G.W. (2004-2005). Challenging and changes to Tinto's persistence theory: a historical review. *Junior College Student Retention, 6*, 191-207.

Miller, T. (2007). Will they stay or will they go: Predicting the risk of attrition at a large public university. *College and University, 83*, 2-7.

Muis, K.R., Winnie, P.H., & Jamieson-Noel, D. (2007). Using a multitrait-multimethod analysis to examine conceptual similarities of three self-regulated learning inventories. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*, 177-195.

Mussano, F. (1982). *A model summer freshmen exploration program.* 1-10. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED227781)

Naumann, W.C., Bandolas, D., & Gutkin, T.B. (2003). Identifying variables that predict college success for first-generation college students. *The Journal of College Admission, 181*, 4-9.

Nava, R.G. (2001). *Holistic education: Pedagogy of universal love.* Brandon, VT: Foundation For Educational Renewal.

Orr, D.W. (2004). *Earth in mind: Our way into the future.* Washington, DC: Island Press.

Osborne, J.W. (1997). Identification with academics and academic success among community college students. *Community College Review, 25*, 59-67.

Pagan, R., & Edwards-Wilson, R. (2002-2003). A mentoring program for remedial students. *Journal of College Student Retention, 4* (3), 207-226.

Pan, W., Guo, S., Alikonis, C., & Bai, H. (2008). Do intervention programs assist students to succeed in college? A multilevel longitudinal study. *College Student Journal, 42* (1), 90-98.

Parker, D.R., & Boutelle, K. (2009). Executive function coaching for college students with learning disabilities and ADHD: *A new approach for fostering self-determination. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 24*, 204-215.

Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Payne, E.M., & Hand, C., (2008). First-generation college students: A study of Appalachian student success. *Journal of Developmental Education, 32*, 4-15.

Perkins, D., & Grotzer, T. (1997). Teaching intelligence, *American Psychologist, 52*, 1125-1133.

Perez, L.X. (1998). Sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming: Intervention strategies for students at risk. *Community College Review, 26*, 63-78.

Peterson, R., Lavelle, E., & Guarino, A.J. (2006). The relationship between college students' executive functioning and study strategies. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 36*, 59-67.

Powell, T. (2003). Alabama state takes new approach to curb low-retention rates. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 20*, 37-51.

Proctor, B.E., Prevatt, F., Adams, K., Hurst, A., & Petscher, Y. (2006). Study skills profiles of normal-achieving and academically-struggling college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*, 37-51.

Rachal, K.C., Daigle, S., & Rachal, W.S. (2007). Learning problems reported by college students: Are they using learning strategies. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 34*, 191-199.

Rampell, C. (2008). Colleges mine data to predict dropouts. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 54*, 1- 3.

Ratliff, G.L. (2008). *Freshman interest groups: Designing a model for success*. Online Submission. Suny Postdam. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED501577)

Reisberg, L. (1999). Colleges struggle to keep would-be dropouts enrolled. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 46*, A54-A56.

Rendon, L. (2006). *Reconceptualizing success for underserved students in higher education*. National Symposium Plenary Session. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, Washington, DC.

Roth-Van der Werf, T.J.M., Resing, W.C.M., & Slenders, A.P.A.C. (2002). Task similarity and transfer of an inductive reasoning training. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 27*, 296-325.

Ryan, M.P., & Glenn, P.A. (2002). Increasing one-year retention rates by focusing on academic competence: An empirical odyssey. *Junior College Student Retention, 43*, 297-324.

Santovec, M.L. (2003). Early warning system keeps new students on track. *Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education, 17*, 1-2.

Sargent, A.G., & Schlossberg, N.K. (1988). Managing adult transitions. *Training and Development Journal, 42*, 58-60.

Schlossberg, N.K. (1990). Training counselors to work with older adults. *Generations, 14*, 1-7.

Schlossberg, N.K., and others (1985). *Theories and concepts; a variety of ideas. Chaps 1-3 of Adult Career Development: Concepts, Issues and Practices*. Collected Works, 1-48. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED325750)

Schoem, D. (2002). Transforming undergraduate education: Moving beyond distinct undergraduate initiatives. *Change, 34*, 51-55.

Shivpuri, S. Schmitt, N., Oswald, F.L., & Kim, B.H. (2006). Individual differences in academic growth: Do they exist, and can we predict them? *Journal of College Student Development, 47*, 69-86.

Sidle, M.W., & McReynolds, J. (1999). The freshman year experience: Student retention and student success. *NASPA Journal, 36*, 288-300.

Sieveking, N., & Perfetto, G. (2001). A student-centered individual-level university retention program where attrition is low. *Journal of College Student Retention, 2,* 341-353.

Smith, K.S., Rook, J.E., & Smith, T.W. (2007). Increasing student engagement using effective and metacognitive writing strategies in content areas. *Preventing School Failure, 51*, 43-48.

Speck, B.W., & Hoppe, S.L. (2004). *Service-learning: History, theory, and issues.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Steinberg, A. (2000). Community-connected learning. *School Administrator, 57*, 40-44.

Stevenson, J.M., Buchanan, D.A, Sharpe, A. (2006-2007). Commentary: The pivotal role of the faculty in propelling student persistence and progress toward degree completion. *Junior College Student Retention, 8*, 141-148.

Swartz, S.L., Prevatt, F., & Proctor, B.E. (2005). A coaching intervention for college students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Psychology in the schools, 42*, 647-656.

Thomas, E.L. (1997). First in their families: An exploration of first-generation students' perspectives of retention in community colleges (Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2009). *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*.

Thorell, L., Lindqvist, S., Nutley, S.B., Bohlin, G., & Klingberg, T. (2009). Training and transfer effects of executive functions in preschool children. *Developmental Science, 12*, 106-113.

Ting, S.M.R., Grant, S., & Plenert, S.L. (2000). The excellence-commitment-and-effective learning (ExCEL) group: An integrated approach for first-year college students' success. *Journal of College Student Development. 41*, 353-360.

Tovar, E., & Simon, M.A. (2006). Academic probation as a dangerous opportunity: Factors influencing diverse college students' success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 30*, 547-564.

Vischer, M.G., Wathington, H., Richburg-Hayes, L., Schneider, E., Cerna, O., Sansone, C., & Ware, M. (2008). *The learning communities demonstration: Rationale, sites, and research designs. National Center for Postsecondary Research,* 1-59.

Webb, L.D., & Brigman, G.A. (2006). Student success skills: Tools and strategies for improved academic and social outcomes. *Professional School Counseling, 10*, 112-120.

Whitt, E. (2001) "-Document Analysis-." In Conrad, C.F., Hawort, J.G., & Lattuca, L.R. *Quantitative research in higher education: Expanding perspective* (2nd ed.). Des Moines, IA: Pearson Custom.

Wild, L., & Ebbers, L. (2002). Rethinking student retention in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 26*, 503-519.

Wilson, S. (2005). Improving retention and success: A case study approach for practical results. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 7*, 245-261.

Witherspoon, A.D., Long, C.K., & Chubick, J.D. (1999). Prediction of college student dropouts using EDS scores. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 82-86.

York, M., & London, B. (2004). *Retention and student success in higher education.* London, England: Open University Press.

Zohar, A., Degani, A., & Vaaknin, E. (2001). Teachers' beliefs about low-achieving students and higher order thinking. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 469-485.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Initial Email from Director to Administrators at Institution Y who Work with EWS

I want to introduce to you all – a doctoral student from FIU who is doing her dissertation study on undergraduate attrition and retention programs. Her name is Shelly Hamilton. She will be choosing approximately 12 individuals randomly for her study – including personnel here from [institution's name deleted] who are involved with interventions targeting at-risk or developmental students, including the early alert system and student concerns committee. She has received approval from [institution's name deleted] Institutional Review Board to interview [institution's name deleted] faculty and staff for the study. The purpose of this study is to explore through the eyes of the administrators, Early Warning Systems (EWS) for first-time in college (FTIC) students at our institution. Participation in this study will take 1 to 2 hours of your time. Any information that can identify you and/or students in the documents will be replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Shelly's information is listed below and she will be reaching out to potential participants to schedule interviews. I have already completed an interview with her and she did a great job of utilizing the time. Please make every effort to assist her in this important study which should provide useful information to our community in service to our students.

Shelly Hamilton
Doctoral Student
Florida International University

APPENDIX B

Initial Email from Researcher to Selected Administrators at Institution X

Hello [name omitted],

You have been chosen at random to be in a research study about undergraduate attrition, and retention programs. Approximately 12 individuals will be randomly chosen for this study. The purpose of this study is to explore Early Warning Systems (EWS) for first-time in college (FTIC) students at your institution. Participation in this study will take 1 to 2 hours of your time. Any information that can identify you and/or students in the interview and any documents obtained, will be replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Can you please contact me at the number listed below to schedule a day and time for the interview?

Thank you very much for all of your help. Have a Blessed day.

Shelly Hamilton
Doctoral Student
Florida International University

APPENDIX C

Email to Administrators at Institution X and Y, Requesting Personal Email to Send
Verbatim Transcript

Hi [Name omitted],

Thank you very much for responding to my email and for providing a personal email
where I can send you the verbatim interview transcript. The verbatim interview transcript
will be sent to the personal email you provided.

Again, thank you very much for all of your help. And, thank you for the well
wishes. Blessings for the new year.

God Bless always.
Shelly Hamilton

VITA

SHELLY-ANN HAMILTON

Born, Jamaica, West Indies

1995-2000   B.A., English
                   University at Buffalo
                   Buffalo, NY

1999-1999   Women's Athletics Program
                   Internship
                   University at Buffalo
                   Buffalo, NY

1999-2000   Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
                   Internship
                   University at Buffalo
                   Buffalo, NY

2000-2000   Academic Intervention and Mentoring
                   (AIM) Program
                   Internship
                   University at Buffalo
                   Buffalo, NY

2000-2004   Processing Specialist
                   Division of Enrollment Services
                   Barry University
                   Miami Shores, FL

2002-2004   M.S., Higher Education Administration
                   Barry University
                   Miami, FL

2004-2004   The Office of Student Success
                   Internship
                   Broward College
                   Broward, FL

2004-2007   Academic Coordinator (Academic Advisor and Coordinator
                   of the Peer Advising and OPS/Summer Advisor Training Programs)
                   Undergraduate Studies Department
                   Florida International University
                   Miami, FL

2007-2013   Higher Education Administration Ed.D.
                   Florida International University
                   Miami, FL

2008-Present   Coordinator of Enrollment Services
                   Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences
                   Nova Southeastern University
                   Davie, FL