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A Comparison of the Impact of A Freshman Experience Program Provided for College-Bound  
High School Students Versus A Freshman Experience Program Completed as  
College Freshmen

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A dissertation  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Amanda H. Johnson  
May 2008

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Dr. Louise MacKay, Chair  
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Dr. Elizabeth Ralston  
Dr. Terry Tollefson

Keywords: Attrition, Dual Enrollment, Freshman Experience Course, High School Senior Year,  
Nontraditional Student, Postsecondary Education, Traditional Student

## ABSTRACT

### A Comparison of the Impact of A Freshman Experience Program Provided for College-Bound High School Students Versus A Freshman Experience Program Completed as College Freshmen

by

Amanda H. Johnson

With over two thirds of high school graduates going on to pursue postsecondary options after high school and over one fourth at 4-year institutions and nearly half at 2-year schools never reaching their sophomore year, it is evident that the transition from high school to college is a broken one for many students. There has been a nationwide call to redefine the senior year of high school and rethink the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. Aligned with this plea, Walters State Community College began an initiative, the Freshman Experience program, to ease some of the strains associated with the transition process and, in 1993, began offering this course to high school seniors. The program was expanded and offered to seniors at 23 high schools in a rural 10-county service delivery area in East Tennessee. The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who completed a freshman experience course while still in high school engaged in more actions that positively impact retention than did those who had not had such a course prior to college enrollment. The study included 1,391 students, 550 who completed the course at the high school level and 841 who completed the course during their 1st semester of college enrollment.

Chi-square analysis of the data was conducted to investigate 6 variables. The major findings were that high school freshman experience completers (a) made application for college earlier, (b) earned significantly more advanced studies credits, (c) had significantly fewer absences

during their 1st semester of college, (d) had significantly fewer course withdrawals, (e) had significantly fewer course failures, and (f) had significantly higher cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester than did the postsecondary program completers.

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of a freshman experience course or similar program serves to positively impact the transition of high school seniors to the postsecondary environment. These results confirm the need for high schools and postsecondary institutions to work together to provide students with a seamless transition in an effort to increase student retention and program completion.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the people who mean the most to me – my family. They are the essence of who I am and the drive behind all that I want to become. Each of them share in the joy of completing this task and each are a part of this accomplishment.

To my husband, *Clifford Dustin Johnson*, who has patiently endured the rollercoaster of emotions that have accompanied this endeavor. Your support, encouragement, and confidence in me may have, at times, gone unacknowledged but were truly never unnoticed. Thank you for our amazing relationship and your love.

To my baby boy, *Hadley Clifton Johnson*, who has been the light of my life since even before you came into the world. Your precious smile and endless giggles were the motivation Mommy needed to finish this task. I do not want to miss a single second with you. It is my prayer that you will always be encouraged to achieve your dreams.

To my parents, *David and Gena Harris*, who instilled within me, from an early age, the desire to set high aspirations for myself and the work ethic to unceasingly continue until they were achieved. Your unfailing support, encouragement, and confidence in me have fueled each and every journey I have pursued. I have always known that no matter what you would be on the sidelines cheering me on. And to my mother: You are my best friend and I know that you will read every word of “my book.”

To my brother, *Jordan Tyler Harris*: You will never know how special you are to me. I am so proud of the young man you are. I pray that your dreams will be limitless, your accomplishments unimaginable, and I promise to be there every step of the way.

And to *Dr. Pamela E. Goodman*, who is like a mother to me, and who has given so much of herself in support of me. For every time that I wanted to quit you always had a “Now honey” prepared. It was your confidence in me that gave me the needed confidence in myself. “Thank you” is so inadequate in comparison to your role.

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When I entered this program I could never have imagined the wealth of support that I would graciously receive from a variety of individuals. Their contributions have helped to ensure that this study came to fruition. “Thank you” is so inadequate a phrase to truly express my gratitude and sincere appreciation.

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From the earliest point in which I understood the educational system, Dr. R. Lynn Gilmore always referred to “when” I completed my doctorate not “if.” He was the first to plant this dream inside of me and has since attentively followed my progress.

Not only is this study dedicated to Dr. Pam Goodman, it could not have happened without her. She encouraged me to get started on this journey while at a young age and has been by my side every step of the way – celebrating the milestones and pushing me up the mountains.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

What happens to high school students once they graduate? Barth, Haycock, Huang, and Richardson (2001) noted that two thirds of high school graduates go on to pursue some form of postsecondary education the following fall, with that number rising to three quarters within 2 years after high school graduation. In a rural East Tennessee area that comprises the 10-county service delivery area of Walters State Community College (in which the population of this study was located), over 53% of high school graduates were reported to be college bound after high school graduation. The percentages of college-bound high school graduates, as noted in a statistical report compiled by Walters State Community College staff, ranged from 53.1% to 59.6% for the years specific to this study, 2000 through 2004.

Although college aspirations are on the rise, Barth et al. (2001) noted, "Of the number of high school graduates who attempt postsecondary education, more than one fourth of freshmen at 4-year colleges and nearly half of those at 2-year colleges do not even make it to their sophomore year" (p. 6). Plucker, Chien, and Zaman (2006) cited hundreds of thousands who dropped out annually without ever earning any type of degree or certificate because they arrived at postsecondary institutions unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead. Clearly, the transition from high school to college has been unsuccessful for many students.

With such a backdrop, educators should be clear about the function of the senior year of high school. Is the senior year of high school really needed? Some educators would say yes, whereas others might say no. The purpose of high school, especially the senior year, should be to ensure that all graduates are prepared to transition into the pursuit of postsecondary education or training (Barth et al., 2001). The National Commission on the High School Senior Year advocated, "The final year should serve as a consummation of what already has been accomplished and a launching pad for what lies ahead" (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship

Foundation, 2001, p. 11). The senior year should not be a stopping point in students' educational pursuits. Instead, it should be a point of embarkation toward postsecondary endeavors--not a finish line, but a relay station. Unfortunately, the current handoff process has been blundered. In addressing this issue, the National Commission on the High School Senior Year proposed:

The senior year should be the place where one leg of the educational journey ends and the baton is passed as seamlessly and smoothly as possible so that young people enjoy a powerful boost into and through the leg that follows. (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, pp. 12-13)

Thus, there is a great need to redefine and rethink how students transition from secondary to postsecondary education. There is an immediate need to seize the lost opportunities of the senior year of high school. In its report, *The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year: Finding a Better Way*, the National Commission on the High School Senior Year (2001) noted, "It is not about the failure of American schools, but about the possibilities for a brighter, more productive high school senior year" (p. 1).

Commensurate with the national-level calls for action, Walters State Community College (WSCC) undertook an initiative in 1993, the Freshman Experience Program, in an effort to alleviate some of the stressors commonly associated with the secondary to postsecondary transition. This effort began as a pilot program offered in two service area high schools. In 1994, the program expanded to eight schools, and, based on its perceived success, was offered to all service area high schools that comprise the college's service delivery area and has continued as an ongoing program.

The issue of student departure from college is not a recent phenomenon, nor is it a concern affecting only a limited number of students. Instead, of the approximately 72% of high school graduates who pursued some type of postsecondary training, 27% of those at 4-year colleges and 44% of those at community colleges did not return for their sophomore year (Haslam & Rubenstein, 2000). According to Frost (1993), statistics for 1992 showed that 92% of first-time, full-time college freshmen had just graduated from high school and of those, only half graduated with baccalaureate degrees within 4 years. Even more startling was Tinto's report

that noted 75% of students who left did so during or directly after their 1st semester in college (as cited in Howard & Jones, 2000).

Tinto (1988) noted that previous researchers assumed that reasons for student departure were consistent throughout the students' tenure at an institution. However, Tinto (1988) argued that student departure was highest during the 1st year of college and especially during the 1st 6 weeks of enrollment; he also pointed out that students' reasons for leaving at such times were notably different from their reasons for leaving later in college. The 1st year has been often a stumbling block for many freshmen. Tinto (1988) emphasized that the 1st 6 months of college enrollment was a critical period and added, "Completing the first year is more than half the battle in persistence to the bachelor of arts degree" (p. 439).

Many researchers have concluded that this high rate of departure has been affected by the students' level of preparedness for the transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions. Tinto (1988) described the transition process as a corridor between the old (high school) and the new (college) that, in many cases, brought about serious struggles. Although some students are able to cope successfully with such struggles, Tinto (1988) maintained that many find it to be more arduous and, "Without assistance many withdraw from the college very early in the academic year" (p. 444). According to Frost (1993), many students find the move to college a difficult one that can be so challenging that they leave after just a few weeks.

The reasons behind an unsuccessful transition from secondary to postsecondary studies stem from a variety of origins. Bailey, Hughes, and Mechur-Karp (2002) suggested:

Students may be unsure of how to apply for college or how to pay for it; they could be academically unprepared for higher education; or they may face what can be a frustrating task of balancing school and work while searching for a course of study that will place them in a meaningful career path. (p. 18)

### *Statement of the Problem*

This study focused on whether or not students who have completed a freshman experience course designed to ease the transition from high school to postsecondary education

while still in high school engage in more actions that positively impact retention than do those who have not had such training prior to college enrollment. This study specifically focused on those students who had successfully completed a freshman experience course. Within this population two subgroups were studied--those who completed the course while still in high school and those who completed the course during their 1st semester of full-time college enrollment. These students were enrolled in the 23 high schools in East Tennessee that comprise the Walters State Community College's general service delivery area.

### *Research Questions*

In an attempt to research the impact of offering a freshman experience class to students who were enrolled in their senior year of high school as compared to students who completed a comparable class upon college enrollment, the following research questions were investigated within this study:

1. Is there a difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
2. Is there a difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
3. Is there a difference in the collegiate class number of absences at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
4. Is there a difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

5. Is there a difference in the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of college enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
6. Is there a difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Stated in the null form, the hypotheses outlined below were addressed in this study:

Ho1: There is no difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

Ho2: There is no difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

Ho3: There is no difference in the collegiate class number of absences between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

Ho4: There is no difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment.

Ho5: There is no difference in the number of courses failed at the college level between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level



Ho6: There is no difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

### *Significance of the Study*

The economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century abounds with professional jobs in addition to the skilled jobs that have nearly tripled in recent years. According to the National Commission on the High School Senior Year (2001), "The conditions of modern life demand that all students graduate from a . . . program that equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education . . ." (p. 3). The report went on to note:

National life and the economy are changing much faster than our schools . . . The nation faces a deeply troubling future unless we transform the lost opportunity of the senior year into an integral part of students' preparation for life, citizenship, work, and future education. (p. 1)

Eder (2006) offered continued support by pointing out that the skills that contributed to success for college freshmen and those needed for career advancement were the same. Attention to the disconnect between secondary and postsecondary education came about when, for example, only 20% of graduates went on to pursue a college education. However, with over 70% of high school graduates now pursuing some form of postsecondary education, all levels of education need to be connected in order to afford students with a seamless and successful transition (Eder).

Even though disconnects exist between secondary and postsecondary institutions, the senior year of high school has rarely been used for college preparation. Instead, as noted by the Education Commission of the States (2006), all too often "High school seniors take easy classes, cut corners, or work long hours at after-school jobs" (p. 1). This scenario is so commonplace that terms such as "senioritis" and "senior slump" often have been associated with the waning performance of high school seniors during the last semester (Sachs, 1998).

Clearly, it is important that college-bound students experience a seamless transition into postsecondary endeavors if the goal of education is truly to increase the number of students who

are successful at the postsecondary level. In addition, the literature is rife with examples of the efforts of postsecondary institutions to ameliorate the uncertainty associated with the transition; however, various researchers have noted that such efforts usually had been undertaken only after the students had entered college (Barefoot, 2000; Chapman & Reed, 1987; Cuseo, 1997; “Freshman Seminars,” 2006; Howard & Jones, 2000; Rhodes & Carifio, 1999; Sanders & Burton, 1996; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999). In fact, documentation of intervention measures offered by postsecondary institutions within high school settings has been lacking; but the expression of the need for such an effort was espoused by McCabe (2005) who stated, “Colleges cannot succeed if they wait until students enroll before addressing their preparation”; instead, “Colleges must work in concert with high schools to keep more students in school and prepare them for college success” (p. 29).

In alignment with the aforementioned admonition, this researcher investigated a unique freshman experience program that has been offered to college-bound students prior to their high school graduation in an effort to assess the program’s association with the participants’ transition to a postsecondary institution.

### *Definitions of Terms*

The definitions provided below are specific to the institutional program being researched and are intrinsic to the design and methodology of this study:

1. *Freshman Experience Course*: A course, labeled as EDUC 1010, developed by Walters State Community College, in an attempt to ease high school students’ transition to college. Curricular topics addressed in the syllabus for the course include: personal enhancement and development, improving academic skills, career possibilities, information about the college, and other success related topics (Walters State Community College Catalog, 2000-2001).

2. *High School Freshman Experience Completers*: For the purpose of this study, this includes students who complete the Freshman Experience course EDUC 1010 during the 1st semester of their senior year of high school.
3. *Postsecondary Freshman Experience Completers*: For the purpose of this study, this includes students who complete the Freshman Experience course EDUC 1010 during their 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment.
4. *Regular Enrollment*: The enrollment status of students who have completed all requirements for admission without the imposition of restrictions or special-status conditions (Walters State Community College Catalog, 2006-2007).
5. *Successful Completers*: For the purpose of this study, this will include both high school freshman experience completers and postsecondary freshman experience completers of the Freshman Experience course with a letter grade of “C” or better.
6. *Advanced Studies*: For the purposes of this study, this refers to the number of college credits earned prior to high school graduation.
7. *Dual Enrollment*: For the purpose of this study, this refers to the enrollment status by which a student is enrolled in a college level course seeking both collegiate and high school credit.
8. *Collegiate, Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)*: The grade point average calculated at the end of each semester that includes all collegiate level course work (Walters State Community College Catalog, 2006-2007).
9. *Traditional Student*: For the purpose of this study, this refers to an individual who enrolls in college during the fall semester following high school graduation.
10. *Nontraditional Student*: For the purpose of this study, this refers to an individual who does not enroll in college immediately after high school, but who attends later on a part-time or full-time basis.
11. *Attrition*: A descriptor of the point in time when an enrolled student separates himself or herself from the college institution (Tinto, 1996a).

### *Delimitations*

The validity of this study was restricted to the college under investigation; thus, it only involved one type of higher education institution--the community college. Another delimitation was that the study involved only traditional students who graduated from high school in 2001 through 2004 and enrolled full-time the following semester and who were successful freshman experience completers. However, using data extracted from multiple years increased the internal validity of the research.

### *Overview of the Study*

Chapter 1 provides an introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, and delimitations and limitations. The chapters succeeding this introductory chapter are organized as follows: Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature related to the high school senior year and the transition process to postsecondary education. Additionally, this chapter contains literature pertaining to freshman experience courses and the perceived contributions of the courses to overall student success, retention, and graduation rates. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology used for this study, including the population, design, process for data collection, as well as data analysis. The analysis of the data collected is provided in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Each fall, millions of people do something that they have never done before: step onto a college campus somewhere in the United States and enroll as students. For institutions of higher education, this translates into the fact that their respective establishments will soon be faced with a freshman population of over four million. Colleges and universities must be ready for these upcoming students and must be willing to make changes in their policies and programs in order to meet the needs of the incoming freshman population (Upcraft & Gardner, 1990). For the millions of students attempting higher education for the first time, college can be a time of excitement as well as a time of massive adjustments and disappointments (Gardner & Jewler, 1993). Norris (1996) equated the need for support, nurturing, and guidance of 1st-year college students to that needed by entering kindergarteners or transitioning middle-school students. The freshman year of college, therefore, is a challenge for students as well as for their institutions. Realizing this, Gardner and Jewler pointed out the obvious demand for a structured and formalized introduction to the college experience.

Researchers have focused on ways in which institutions of higher learning could enhance freshman success. Upcraft and Gardner (1990) questioned why freshmen in particular were targeted for such enhancements and responded to this issue by maintaining “overwhelming evidence that student success is largely determined by experiences during the freshman year” (p. 1). Various studies have shown that approximately one-third of all undergraduate students leave college in their first year (Claggett, 1996; Horn, 1998). A growing body of research supporting the establishment of a “freshman first-year” or “new student” orientation seminar designed to promote the success of college freshmen has emerged (Cuseo & Barefoot, 1996).

Rhodes and Carifio (1999) reported that freshman experience courses have become increasingly popular at 2-year community colleges as a strategy to increase students' success and

retention. Horn (1998), Tinto (1996b), and Tinto, Russo, and Kadel-Taras (1996) stated that students' experiences within their 1st year of college had a lasting influence on their continued persistence in college. However, researchers have shown that dual enrollment programs that allow high school students opportunities to enroll in college courses prior to high school graduation have had the potential to improve college preparation, specifically in acclimating students to postsecondary environments (Bailey et al., 2002). Such a connection implies that providing high school seniors with an opportunity to participate in a freshman experience course could greatly ease the transition process to postsecondary enrollment.

### *The High School Senior Year*

The role of high schools has changed significantly throughout the years and has now evolved into more of an entryway for all students to postsecondary endeavors as well as the workforce. Without question, the senior year of high school is a milestone in American culture. According to Sizer (2003), "More Americans experience the senior-year rite-of-passage than get married, or attend church, or go to baseball games" (p. 27). Too often, however, high school seniors opt out of demanding coursework during their last year of high school, as many of them have already completed both graduation requirements and college entrance requirements. As a result, many students are ready to transition to something beyond high school even before they graduate (Sizer).

By the 4th year of high school, many students have jobs with adult responsibilities, provide for their own welfare, have already received college acceptance letters, and generally feel that their remaining classes are immaterial (Conley, 2002). According to Conley (2001), many seniors view the senior year as a reward for enduring the 12 previous years of school. Even the most dedicated, college-bound students often use the senior year as a "blow-off" time and focus more on enjoying than on exerting themselves (Conley, 2001). Sizer (2003), a former high school teacher, described the senior year as a time when students "avoided classes that were likely to be demanding, and even if they took demanding classes, these seniors were listless,

bored, unprepared for class, and if asked about it, downright rude” (p. 24). Thus, the final year of secondary education has had little meaning for many students’ postsecondary ventures. Dunn (2001) provided the following illustration:

Everything is winding down for seniors. The valedictorian has been chosen, the excitement of college-bound students is palpable, and classes – well, students confess that they’re of little use now. It sounds like an old-fashioned case of June fever – except that it’s only February. And some kids have been slacking off for months already. (p. 12)

School administrators across the nation are seeking ways to keep high school seniors engaged and free of ‘senioritis,’ the term used to describe the tendency of seniors to “goof off” and cease academic growth (Chmelynski, 2004). The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (2001) reported that there has been a growing attitude throughout American communities that students need to “take some time off, relax before entering adulthood, or enjoy the end of adolescence” instead of using the senior year of high school “as a time to strengthen skills or enhance preparation for postsecondary programs” (p. 28). This mindset has become a cultural authority. With this problem being well documented and with the realization that 80% to 90% of entering high school freshmen have expressed intent to continue their studies and enroll in college, there has been a great demand for high school curricula to provide students with greater postsecondary preparation (Conley, 2005).

Although there are clearly opportunities for access to postsecondary educational venues, many students are not being provided with the needed access for success. Dunn (2001) said approximately 50% of all college-bound students were insufficiently prepared. Inadequate preparation has been credited as a major contributing factor as to why approximately half of students at 4-year institutions and even more at community colleges leave before completing a degree or certificate program (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2001). The lack of preparation and multitudes of decisions facing high school seniors leave many confused, frustrated, and lost, which in turn result in large numbers of students--“one-quarter of four-year-college freshmen and close to half of those in community colleges”--who do not return for a 2nd year of study (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, p. 23).

### *The Transition From Secondary to Postsecondary Education*

The transition from high school to college has been more difficult than it is often credited as being, and for many high school seniors it is the first major transition within their lifetime. For many college freshmen, a dangerous myth has been internalized, according to Chaskes (1996) and Conley (2001), in that students believe their high school experience has prepared them for life at the postsecondary institution. Conversely, many, especially those who were the first members of their family to attempt postsecondary endeavors, reached college campuses, as Cohen and Jody (1978) coined, lacking “the skills of studenthood” (p. 2). A 2003 telephone survey conducted by the *Jobs for the Future* organization assessed over 1,000 participants regarding the difficulties, if any, associated with moving from high school to college. Cavanagh (2003) reported, “Fifty-seven percent of those surveyed said that the transition does not work well for most students, and said they favored better coordination between K-12 systems and colleges” (p. 12).

At a time when the economy demands that students achieve educational pursuits beyond high school, there is a distinct requisite for enhanced transitions between secondary and postsecondary institutions. Kirst and Venezia (2001) suggested, “The lack of coordination between the public K-12 and postsecondary schools impedes successful transitions between the systems and diminishes educational opportunity for many students” (p. 93). The disconnect between K-12 and postsecondary education has inhibited opportunities for college preparation and successful college completion (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, there were a variety of aggressive reforms enacted within public kindergarten- through 12th-grade education; unfortunately, postsecondary venues primarily observed without acting on these changes. However, with the growing numbers of high school graduates going on to some type of postsecondary education, Haslam and Rubenstein (2000) noted, “Leaders in postsecondary institutions recognize that they have a large stake in the quality of the K-12 system” and “also see a closely related need to improve the operations of their own educational sector” (p. 1).



Many researchers including Venezia et al. (2003) advocated a shift in focus from access to college to success in college and argued that access was only half of the battle and that the opportunity to be successful was the primary goal. These researchers noted that college success was not a frequent occurrence, specifically citing, “The percentage of four-year graduates in the U.S. adult population has barely increased since 1980 despite increasing attendance rates” (p. 36). Although many students set college as a goal, many did not get there and the many that did often struggled. Conley (2005) noted that merely taking college-prep classes and maintaining a required grade point average for college admission was not adequate enough to guarantee success in college.

A successful transition to college is advantageous for both students and their respective institutions (Gordon, 1990). A distinct stage of any college career has been the transition itself. The stress that accompanies the transition from secondary to postsecondary endeavors can bring about serious struggles. The incidence of students leaving has been highest in the 1st year of college, with the completion of the 1st year as the primary battle toward degree completion (Tinto, 1988). Thus, it seems reasonable to surmise that student departure is often a result of students’ lack of success, in various areas, at the postsecondary level. Howard and Jones (2000) asserted that such instances were particularly common for those who entered postsecondary institutions unprepared, both personally and academically, for the transition. Many students meet postsecondary education with an equivocal notion of the purpose, the goals, and the expectations of the institution. As a result, Levitz and Noel (1989) suggested, “When institutions do not help freshmen develop realistic expectations of themselves and of their college, the demands of the new environment can be overwhelming” (p. 68).

Although there are a wealth of motives associated with students’ reasons for leaving postsecondary pursuits, Tinto (1996b) cited seven major reasons for student departure:

1. academic difficulty;
2. adjustment difficulties;
3. goals: uncertain, narrow, or new;

4. commitments: weak and external;
5. financial inadequacies;
6. incongruence; and
7. isolation. (pp. 1-6)

In a similar vein, Bailey et al. (2002) related that students who failed to persist cited other nonacademic reasons for leaving such as, “They are overwhelmed by the new institutions, they are unfocused, or they had unrealistic expectations of the college experiences” (p. 21).

Academic struggles have comprised 30% to 35% of all student departures (Tinto, 1996b). Many students lack the academic competence and study skills needed to be successful. Among even the most academically sound students there have been transitory difficulties associated with the move from secondary to postsecondary environments. Tinto (1996b) noted, “College is a sometimes ‘foreign’ experience, the transition to it, difficult” (p. 2).

Other areas of difficulty that freshmen often encounter involve the selection of a major area of study and the goals that accompany it (Chapman & Reed, 1987; Tinto, 1996b). According to Tinto (1996b), some uncertainty associated with career goals is typical among students; however, trouble surfaces when uncertainties remain unsettled and begin to plant doubt regarding the need for college without a decided major. Uncertainty regarding what to study has been the most notable reason that high-achieving students leave colleges (Levitz & Noel, 1989). Other factors associated with attrition involved the external commitments and obligations that most students possess. Tinto (1996b) noted specific examples including leaving to “handle a divorce, death, or drinking problem at home, to explore a relationship with a loved one in another state, or to help with the family farm or business”; such students may have the ability to complete college work, but are unable to manage it along with various other demands (p. 2). Relative to social needs, many students, especially those who leave within the 1st year, are unsuccessful and dissatisfied because they fail to make contacts and build relationships with classmates, professors, or administrators at the institution (Frost, 1993; Tinto, 1996b).

Researchers have shown that there is a wide range of experiences that can either weaken or strengthen students' desire to finish (Cuseo & Barefoot, 1996; Horn, 1998; Tinto, 1996b). Tinto et al. (1996) reported that the more students were involved in college the more they would profit from the experience and the more probable they would stay enrolled. According to Tinto (1996b), involvement in college is important throughout the college years, but nowhere is it more important than the 1st year of college). Pascarella, Smart, and Ethington (1986) built on Tinto's original research in conducted in 1975 with a 9-year study of students who began their postsecondary education at 2-year institutions. Congruent with Tinto's model from 1975, Pascarella et al. found that academic and social integration were the two variables with the most consistent pattern of positive effects on students' persistence and degree completion. These findings were also in agreement with previous research by Lenning, Beal, and Sauer (1980) who advocated that student involvement and interaction were key factors in student retention.

Offering a freshman-year experience course at the college level was indicative, according to Cuseo and Barefoot (1996), of the institution's "willingness to accept a major share of the responsibility for new student success by taking a proactive step to insure that entering students are fully prepared to take advantage of all the total college experience has to offer" (p. 66). Bailey et al. (2002) maintained that incorporating college credit courses during the senior year of high school could encourage students who might slack off to participate in more engaging courses during their senior year. Additionally, such opportunities could serve to increase the potential for student success in college, in that students would already be somewhat accustomed to college-level work. Cavanagh (2003) discussed the recommendations of the *Jobs for the Future* organization that advocated increased efforts to provide high school students with advanced access to college courses. Aside from becoming more academically prepared, allowing high school students to participate in college level courses could facilitate the psychological transition as well. Such opportunities could "serve as a demystifying experience for students, allowing them to acclimate to the college environment earlier" (Bailey et al., 2002, p. 21).

There is a distinct need for young adults to know what is expected at the postsecondary level. Too many students arrive at colleges with uninformed and impractical expectations. College courses provided to high school seniors could afford the students an opportunity to experience expectations that are more realistic, assist in developing self-confidence, and ultimately provide assistance in navigating the transition from high school to college. Bailey et al. (2002) advocated that such programs “enable them [high school seniors] to adjust more easily to life upon high school graduation” (p. 22). Although the literature documenting such programs has been sparse, it has been noted that students who participate in collegiate courses while still in high school were more successful in their postsecondary attempts--specifically having fewer drops in collegiate grade point averages than those without such secondary experiences (Bailey et al., 2002).

Clearly, the transition from high school to college is difficult for many students because of the increased social freedoms and academic difficulties. Some students successfully make the transition, whereas others might succeed, but experience many challenges. As a result, a growing number of colleges and universities are attempting to combat such transitory difficulties by offering freshman experience courses (Thompson & Geren, 2002).

### *P-16 Concept*

Since the early 1990s, numerous educators at all levels have been progressing toward the idea of a seamless educational system; this concept, referred to as P-16, encompasses preschool through grade 16 (or the completion of a postsecondary program). A primary goal of P-16 initiatives has been to link the divergent worlds of secondary education (preschool, elementary, middle, and high schools) with higher education institutions in an effort to support the successful transition from one stage to the next (Colton, 2006; Kleiman, 2001). The purpose of P-16 goes beyond aligning standards to the pursuit of common objectives: better educated and more prepared students (Kleiman). School systems, colleges, universities, and businesses and industries are pressed to work cooperatively in an effort to better prepare students for the

challenges of the labor force as well as any higher education endeavors they might pursue (Schuetz, 2001). Policy makers have made P-16 partnerships and the coordination involved a top priority (Schuetz).

The concept of P-16 has been fueled by the demand to increase the number of graduates at the postsecondary level. In the economy of the 21st century, most individuals need education beyond the high school diploma in order to obtain solid employment. Colton (2006) noted that 2 years of postsecondary education is the minimum standard for anticipated future success, while also pointing out that the initial years of college are also the most difficult for students. The question, therefore, is framed, “How then to increase the number of young people who stay in the education pipeline and persist through to the college dream?” (Hoffman & Robins, 2005, p. 5). One suggestion offered by the framers of P-16 was the concept of implementing 1st-year college programs designed to ease the transition and promote persistence (Hoffman & Robins).

Although a variety of initiatives aimed at easing the transition from high school to college are on the rise, the fastest growing approach of this decade has been dual enrollment programs (Bailey & Mechur-Karp, 2003). Plucker et al. (2006) reported that an estimated two million students participate in dual enrollment programs each year. This popularity has been supported by the growing number of policymakers at the state and federal level, who, in addition to individual educators and private foundations have promoted such programs by establishing funding for such efforts. The Tennessee Lottery Scholarship Program created a Dual Enrollment Grant Program for the purpose of providing financial assistance to high school students who participated in college coursework while still working toward their high school diplomas with the mission of encouraging “postsecondary education and the acceleration of postsecondary attainment” (College Pays, 2008, n. p.).

Proponents of the P-16 initiative pertaining to promoting college access and success cited a variety of reasons such transition programs, specifically dual enrollment efforts, could best serve students by (a) providing students with realistic information regarding the skills needed to be successful in college, (b) assisting faculty at both levels (secondary and postsecondary) with a

better understanding of how to prepare students for the college experience, and (c) allowing access to college for the traditionally noncollege-bound students (Bailey & Mechur-Karp, 2003). Participation in college courses while still in high school provides students with an indication of whether or not they are prepared for a total plunge into the college setting. Additionally, as Tinto's (1996b) research determined, unrealistic expectations play a role in the reasons many college freshmen fail to persist. Credit-based transition programs, such as dual enrollment, provide students with more accurate expectations of college life and also enables faculty to work to equip students with the skills needed to meet their goals. Lastly, with so many college freshmen entering as first-generation college students, transition programs that take students to college while still in the comforts of high school or that bring college to the high school level, have provided these students with experiences that grant them the successes needed to be confident in their ability to flourish at the college level (Bailey & Mechur-Karp).

#### *Trend Toward Dual Enrollment Programs*

The concept of dual enrollment programs is not new; instead, the idea of simultaneous enrollment has been present on college campuses for over 30 years (Bailey, Hughes, & Mechur-Karp, 2003). Dual enrollment permits high school students to enroll in college courses prior to high school graduation. Originally designed as a means for only the brightest students to seek a competitive lead, current researchers have suggested that there is a growing interest in this approach as a way to encourage and foster success for all students (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Hoffman & Robin, 2005). Additionally, the initiatives associated with the P-16 movement, according to Schuetz (2001), have emphasized the benefits of dual enrollment on the transition process. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities advocated that dual enrollment programs could serve as the link between secondary and postsecondary education. Colton (2006) reported that in response to the changing demands of the educational system, many institutions were "tearing down the walls between high school

and college” (p. 3) and constructing dual enrollment programs or other similar initiatives in an effort to establish seamless transitions between high schools and colleges.

Clearly, it is in the interest of both college and university campuses as well as high school sectors to provide students with a safe and successful transition to their postsecondary endeavors. Hoffman and Robins (2005) suggested that when structured properly, dual enrollment “can accustom these students to the demands of college while supporting them to meet those demands within their most familiar high school environments” (p. 3). Dual enrollment is an excellent tool in the battle to keep students persisting from high school to college graduation. Tinto (1996b) cited adjustment difficulties as one of the seven major reasons for student departure at the postsecondary level. Hoffman and Robins advocated dual enrollment programs as a way to combat such struggles, noting that they afford students the opportunity to try out the collegiate environment while still benefiting from the support and comfort of being at home and in a familiar high school. They specifically pointed out, “The college try out can allay the fears of first-generation college goers” (p. 6). Bailey et al. (2003) supported this notion and added that time on campus and contact with facets outside of the college classroom could also ease the psychological transition from high school to college.

Bailey et al. (2003) concluded, “Dual enrollment has the potential to facilitate the high school-to-college transition for a broad range of students . . . and it can acclimate high school students to a college environment” (p. 3). Bailey and Mechur-Karp (2003) cited another benefit of such credit-based transition programs as providing information that is more practical to students regarding the necessary skills to be successful in postsecondary endeavors. According to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2002), these programs ultimately smooth the transition to higher education, which leads to an increase in the probability that students will complete higher education programs and ultimately be better prepared for the labor force.

Dual enrollment programs could also help combat the lost senior year. Strauss (2006) noted the call from over half of America’s governors to revamp the 12th grade and pointed to

dual enrollment programs that allow students to start their postsecondary endeavors while still in high school as a better way for students to obtain skills that should prove beneficial in both college and the workforce. Peterson (2003) called on community colleges to cease blaming secondary schools for the lack of college preparation, and, instead, work with them to reclaim the senior year by providing opportunities for dual enrollment with the goal of increasing students' aspirations to attend college and ultimately be successful there. Bailey and Mechur-Karp (2003) reported that students who had taken part in some form of credit-based transition program experienced fewer drops in their collegiate freshman-year grade point averages than did those who had not participated in such a program. Plucker et al. (2006) maintained that those students who took part in credit-based transition programs earned higher grades, required less remediation, and had higher rates of persistence at the postsecondary level. Additionally, these researchers suggested a strong correlation between postsecondary success and an unambiguous understanding of collegiate level expectations (Plucker et al.).

### *Community College Freshmen*

Clagett (1996) described community colleges as “the great American experiment in higher education” (p. 1). Community colleges offer opportunities to all students, including students who lack basic skills, study habits, and support networks as a result of their open-door admissions policy (Clagett). He observed that many community college students were first-generation college students, making the already difficult transition to college even more challenging. Terenzini (as cited in Clagett) maintained:

Among nontraditional, primarily first-generation, college students, however, the adaptation to college was far more difficult. Indeed, for many, going to college constituted a major *disjunction* in their life course. For these students, college-going was not part of their family's tradition or expectations. On the contrary, those who were the first in their immediate family to attend college were *breaking*, not continuing, family tradition. For these students, college attendance often involved multiple transitions – academic, social, and cultural. (p. 1)



Researchers at Moraine Valley Community College (*Retention/New Student Survey*, 1996) surveyed students to inquire about the difficulties and needs they experienced during their freshman year. This study indicated the top difficulty was in acquiring self-discipline. Other difficulties cited by 30% to 38% of the surveyed population included: (a) interference of work and personal responsibilities with school work, (b) difficulty making decisions about majors, (c) test-taking problems, and (d) trouble paying attention to the instructors (*Retention/New Student Survey*). This study also addressed some of the sources students used to get help with problems. According to the survey, the most frequent solution, chosen by 73% of the students surveyed, was to “work it out myself” (*Retention/New Student Survey*, p. 8). Students were more than twice as likely to consult family, friends, or another student than to talk to a community college instructor, counselor, or staff member (*Retention/Student Survey*).

The nature of community colleges, which are primarily comprised of commuter students, has failed to provide students with vast opportunities for informal contact or interactions with others at the institution or the overall school culture. In relation, Glass and Garrett (1995) suggested that community colleges could benefit greatly from the incorporation of a freshman experience or extended orientation course. The authors continued by observing the need for additional research to confirm the relationship between freshman experiences courses and community college students' success and retention.

#### *Development of Freshman Experience Courses*

“The most varied student body in the history of higher education” was Levine’s (1990) description of freshman classes. Despite the location, year, or century, college freshmen always have been and will continue to be their own distinct group with distinct needs. The importance of orienting new students to college was realized early in the history of higher education (Gardner & Jewler, 1993; Gordon, 1990). Gordon stated that the presence of orientation programs decreased after World War II and were nearly obsolete by the mid 1960s (as cited in Gardner & Jewler). It was in the 1970s that college administrators began to recognize that

programs were needed to help new students, both traditional and nontraditional, adapt successfully to the college system (Dwyer, 1990; Gardner & Jewler). A revival of interest in freshman experience programs was brought about by the lack of homogeneity among college freshmen. Despite their various backgrounds, Dwyer illustrated that college freshmen have one common thread: need. Dwyer also maintained that college freshmen had a need for information, to feel accepted, and to know that someone cared about their success.

The term “*The Freshman Year Experience*” often has been used to describe a program designed to enhance learning and success among 1st-year college students. However, Hankin and Gardner (1996) preferred to define the term as “a philosophy for assimilating new students into the college environment” (p. 3). Levine (1990) defined the freshman experience concept as an educational agenda with four distinctive characteristics: (a) it must provide the skills and knowledge needed to live in our world, (b) it must provide hope, (c) it must give a sense of responsibility, and (d) it must give students a feeling of efficacy. Upcraft and Gardner (1990) referred to freshman success as a six-component concept that should include:

1. developing academic and intellectual competence;
2. establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships;
3. developing an identity;
4. deciding on a career and life-style;
5. maintaining personal health and wellness; and
6. developing an integrated philosophy of life. (p. 2)

The founding philosophy behind the concept was that freshman-year experience courses made for a better undergraduate experience entirely (Hankin & Gardner).

Regardless of the definition an institution adopts, freshman-year experience programs are, according to Hankin and Gardner (1996), parallel to the kind of “basic training” used by the armed forces--in that the underlying concept is to “teach new members of the group the organization’s history, customs, traditions, language, folkways, mores, norms, power structure, significant leaders, rules, regulations, programs, services and, in general, establish patterns for

upward mobility and success” (p. 4). Jewler and Gardner (1993) suggested that a freshman-year experience course should be an optional, graded, credit course taught for a full term by faculty and staff of the institution. Suggested course curricula varies, but should include assignments, lectures, exercises, and visits related to promoting academic, vocational, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual growth (Cueso, 1997; Cueso & Barefoot, 1996; Jewler, 1990; Jewler & Gardner, 1993). Summarizing the concept of the course, Jewler described the freshman-year experience program as "a fresh hybrid of academic discipline and student affairs development theory” (p. 215).

Higher education officials have been concerned with student retention and their goal of ensuring a stable student population from year to year. Various researchers (Feldman, 1993; Pascarella et al., 1986; Sanders & Burton, 1996; Tinto, 1996b) have concluded that student retention at the postsecondary level has been an issue of extensive concern for higher education officials.

In 1975, Tinto (1988) developed a model of student persistence-withdrawal process. Tinto (1988) maintained that students withdrew from college because they experienced difficulties in one of three areas: separation, transition, or incorporation. Some students could not disassociate themselves from their former affiliations or communities within their high school. Others experienced difficulty in adjusting to the social and intellectual standards of the college. Still others had difficulties in establishing relationships with other members at the college level, in that they did not participate in social interactions on the college campus (Tinto, 1988).

Nearly a decade later, Tinto (1996b) expanded his previous research and identified seven major causes of student withdrawal:

1. academic difficulty;
2. adjustment difficulties;
3. uncertain, narrow, or new goals;
4. weak and external commitments;

5. financial inadequacies;
6. incongruence; and
7. isolation. (pp. 1-6)

Tinto (1996b) stated these causes were further explained as withdrawal because of:

1. inadequate academic skills,
2. difficulty making the transition to college life,
3. having a vague conception of why one was in college,
4. using a college as a stepping stone prior to transfer,
5. discovering interests beyond college,
6. lacking the high level of commitment demanded by college,
7. leaving college to handle personal obligations,
8. lacking the money to pay for college expenses,
9. feeling as if one was not socially or academically integrated into the college, or
10. feeling isolated because of a lack of contacts and membership in the institution. (pp. 1-6)

Tinto (1988) acknowledged the use of orientation programs as a tool to introduce first-time students to the life of college. He recognized, however, that some students were left to acculturate themselves to college on their own. Tinto (1988) described the scenario for such individuals:

Not all individuals, especially those recently removed from the long-known confines of the family and local high-school communities have that capacity. Not all new students are able to make such integrative contacts on their own. As a result, they do not all come to be incorporated into the life of the college, and without assistance, many are unable to establish competent intellectual and social membership in the communities of the college. Many eventually leave. (p. 447)

Many colleges and universities have been focusing more attention on intervention strategies as a way to approach retention and attrition (Brawer, 1996). Freshman orientation programs and seminars have been one of the most commonly implemented intervention strategies used by 2-year community colleges to boost student retention (Brawer; Ferguson,

Wisner, & Discenza, 1986; Rhodes & Caridio, 1999). Tinto's (1996a) research indicated that institutional actions were more likely to yield benefits of student learning and persistence when incorporated into the crucial 1st year of college, given the fact that student attrition rates were highest throughout the 1st year of college and prior to the 2nd year. Researchers have cautioned that student needs should not be ignored beyond the 1st year; however, it was the 1st semester that appeared to be critical in a student's persistence to degree completion (Tinto, 1988). Although freshman experience courses have been in existence for many years, the popularity of such programs has continued to rise, with the number of colleges offering such seminars nearly doubling between 2000 and 2003 to approximately 25% as noted from surveys of over 600 2- and 4-year institutions ("Freshman Seminars Gaining," 2006).

#### *Content of Freshman Experience Courses*

Glass and Garrett (1995) described the efforts of freshman experience courses as being targeted at providing thorough orientations into various aspects of college campuses including support services, extracurricular activities, and interactions with other students. Additionally, these authors suggested using diversified assignments ranging from class discussions to individual self-analysis (Glass & Garrett). Levitz and Noel (1989) advocated that a focus on academic, personal, and social adjustments was needed in order to assist freshmen in their overall success in college. They emphasized the need for a connection between the institution and its freshmen students centered on services designed to assist students with (a) connecting to the environment; (b) making the transition to college; (c) working toward their goals in terms of academic major, degree, and career; and (d) succeeding in the classroom.

Barefoot (2000) expanded upon research conducted throughout the past 3 decades concerning the undergraduate experience and correlates of student success by specifically examining the factors in freshman-year experience courses that lead to academic success. Barefoot concluded that from the present body of research, 1st year experience programs should include:

1. increasing student-to-student interaction,
2. increasing faculty-to-student interaction,
3. increasing student involvement and time on campus,
4. linking the curriculum and the co-curriculum,
5. increasing academic expectations and levels of academic engagement, and
6. assisting students who have insufficient academic preparation for college. (p. 14)

Additionally, the explicit teaching of study skills is crucial for college freshmen. Thompson and Geren (2002) observed, “Both the degree of difficulty and the quantity of material to be mastered are significantly greater than at the high school level” (p. 400). Davis-Underwood and Lee (1994) acknowledged the diversity of course content but outlined a variety of common purposes including attempts to:

equip students with academic survival skills (e.g., note-taking skills, library research skills), social survival skills (e.g., participation in various campus activities, interaction with faculty outside the classroom), and the knowledge they need to function in the university system (e.g., registration information, campus support services) (p. 491).

#### *Intent of Freshman Experience Courses*

Upcraft and Farnsworth (1984) contended that institutions were obligated to assist students in adjusting optimally to the college setting. Researchers clearly illustrated that thousands of freshman-year experience programs have been established with the intent of promoting freshman retention and success (Barefoot 2000; Hankin & Gardner, 1996; Jewler & Gardner 1993). Norris (1996) pointed out that nurturing college freshmen is essential to both academic success as well as general life transitions. The popularity and persistence of freshman-year experience programs indicate their contribution to the needs of 1st-time college students (Gordon, 1990).

Postsecondary institutions continue to come to the realization that freshman year interventions are vital to both retention and student success rates. Davis-Underwood and Lee (1994) suggested that the initial months of college enrollment are most critical; this further

supports the notion that academic success is more probable if the 1st semester of transition goes well. According to research conducted by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience (as cited in Barefoot, 2000), “Over 70% of U.S. colleges and universities offer special 1st-year seminars to assure that new students have at least one small class in which a primary goal is the development of peer relationships” and increased involvement (p. 15). Fidler and Hunter (1990) reported that many institutions were implementing a freshman year seminar to increase the success of their freshmen. Other researchers agree that using a freshman-year experience program is an opportunity to enhance student attitudes and expectations during the crucial time when students are forming impressions about higher education (Barefoot, 2000; Cuseo & Barefoot, 1996). According to Titley (1985), the concept of a freshman seminar is the most effective intervention used to enhance freshman success. This belief was supported by the research of Jewler and Gardner (1985) who stated:

Students who participate in freshman seminars are more knowledgeable about the helping services and resources of the campus, more likely to use such services, more involved in extracurricular activities, more positive in their attitudes toward faculty and the institution, and more likely to report that they have received a good orientation to the college. (p. 14)

Researchers have confirmed that students who enrolled in freshman-year experience programs tended to complete more credit hours, return to the institution at higher rates, have higher levels of academic performance, and persist to program or degree completion at higher rates than did those who do not participate in such a program (Brawer, 1996; Rhodes & Clarifio, 1999; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999). Sanders and Burton (1996) reported on the research of Pascarella and Terenzini in 1983. These researchers at DePaul University created an institution-specific model of freshman retention by using student satisfaction survey data with first-time, full-time freshman attrition data. Compared with students who did not return to DePaul for their sophomore year, this study indicated that students who re-enrolled were more satisfied with their academic experiences, the preparation provided by the university, their personal growth, and the orientation to the college process (Sanders & Burton). Griffith (1996) supported these findings and advocated that student satisfaction and student success was inseparable.

Feldman (1993) concluded that higher education administrators should be aware of such factors and work to create programs, such as freshman-year experience programs, to respond to the needs of students who may possess one or all of the identified variables that have been cited as barriers to their success as freshman students. Similarly, Glass and Garrett (1995) studied four North Carolina community colleges. Their study indicated that completion of some form of orientation program during the 1st term of enrollment promoted and improved “student performance regardless of age, gender, race, major, entrance exam scores, or employment status” (p. 130).

Expanding upon previous research, Sidle and McReynolds (1999) studied the relationship between participation in an institution’s freshman-year experience course and student retention and success by using a control group of similar students who elected not to participate in the freshman-year experience course. Sidle and McReynolds reported that students who participated in the freshman-year experience course continued their enrollment to the fall term of their sophomore year at a significantly higher rate than those who did not participate in the course. Further support for the relationship between freshman-year experience courses and student retention was substantiated by results showing those who enrolled in the freshman-year experience course tended to complete more of their 1st academic year coursework and earn higher GPAs than those students with similar characteristics who did not enroll in such a course (Sidler & McReynolds). Researchers Hummel and Steele (1996) reported that the increased grade statistics for those who participated in a freshman seminar program persisted throughout the close of their sophomore year, as compared to nonprogram participants.

Researchers Fidler and Hunter (1990) reported overwhelmingly high retention rates for the freshman-year seminar course at the University of South Carolina. Participating freshmen had higher sophomore return rates than did nonparticipants for 14 consecutive years. Researchers at Sacramento City College also studied the effects of three different orientation programs on academic performance and retention (as cited in Fidler & Hunter). Results indicated that students who enrolled in the freshman seminar, as compared to those who attended



only a 4-hour or 1-hour orientation session, completed more units of study, earned higher GPAs, and had significantly lower attrition rates (as cited in Fidler & Hunter).

As cited in Fidler and Hunter (1990), extensive research by Banziger, Kramer, and White and Cartledge and Walls also indicated that participation in freshman-year experience programs increased students' knowledge and use of student services. Students participating in such courses tended to be more knowledgeable of campus services such as academic advising, career planning, the library, and health clinic (Fidler & Hunter). Participating students, according to a study by Fidler in 1986, were also found to participate more in extracurricular activities on campus (as cited in Fidler & Hunter).

Throughout the years, students' success in conjunction with a freshman-year experience program has been well documented by various quantitative studies and analyses. Additional research by Sidle and McReynolds (1999) provided measures of student success based on students' responses to course evaluations. Their findings suggested that the greater population of students who participated in the program agreed that taking the course (a) assisted their understanding of the purpose of a university education; (b) helped them to feel more comfortable as members of the campus community; and (c) increased their belief that they could succeed at this particular institution (Sidle & McReynolds, p. 297). Researchers at Rowan University, formerly named Glassboro State Community College, also examined aspects of student satisfaction (Fidler & Hunter, 1990). Of those surveyed, 84% indicated they would recommend the course to other 1st-time college students and 35% recommended that the course be required of all incoming freshmen (Fidler & Hunter). These studies were in agreement with Tinto's (1996b) conclusion, "The roots of successful student retention lie in better education during the first year" (p. 3).

### *Summary*

Based on the research literature reviewed, significant relationships between freshman success and retention can be concluded. In addition, there is a clear call for a more equitable

educational experience that provides all students with an opportunity to receive the preparation needed to be successful in college. However, further research is warranted concerning variables that might affect student retention and success with regard to the timing of the freshman experience course.

Researchers clearly support the notion that participation in a freshman-year experience class increases students' satisfaction and success during their 1st year of college. A growing trend toward advanced or accelerated study programs has allowed students an opportunity to begin their college experience early--often during their senior year of high school. This phenomenon calls for research regarding what differences exist in retention and success rates at postsecondary institutions among students who participated in a freshman-year experience program during their senior year of high school as compared to those who completed the course at the postsecondary institution.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There has been a wealth of research substantiating the need for and benefits of freshman experience classes. However, such research has failed to address the optimal time for offering such courses. This study focused on whether or not students who have completed a freshman experience course designed to ease the transition from high school to postsecondary education while still in high school engage in more actions that positively impact retention than do those who have not had such training prior to college enrollment. The research questions formulated for this study were:

1. Is there a difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
2. Is there a difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
3. Is there a difference in the collegiate class number of absences at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
4. Is there a difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
5. Is there a difference in the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of college enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the

- high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?
6. Is there a difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

### *Population*

The population for this study came from the larger population of students enrolled at Walters State Community College (WSCC), one of 13 community colleges governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. The population was divided into two distinct groups: high school completers and postsecondary completers of WSCC's freshman experience classes. More specifically, the study included those students who completed the freshman experience course as high school seniors during the fall semesters of 2000 through 2003, and the results were compared with those recent high school graduates who completed the freshman experience course during their 1st semester of full-time postsecondary enrollment at Walters State Community College (WSCC) in the fall semesters of 2001 through 2004.

The high school completers were enrolled in 23 public high schools located in 10 counties of rural Appalachia that comprise the WSCC service delivery area. These high schools had student bodies with average enrollments that ranged from lows near 200 to highs near 2,200. The high school students were also enrolled at WSCC on an Advanced Studies basis; consequently, they were numbered among the general student body of WSCC that is shown in Table 1 for the period cited above.

Table 1

*Walters State Community College Student Body Statistics*

Year	Total Enrollment	Male	Female	Part-Time	Full-Time	Average Age
Fall 2000	6163	38.8%	61.2%	44.5%	55.5%	27.9
Fall 2001	5995	36.9%	63.1%	51.1%	48.9%	26.5
Fall 2002	5902	35.5%	64.5%	51.0%	49.0%	26.5
Fall 2003	6214	37.1%	62.9%	52.2%	47.8%	25.9
Fall 2004	5944	35.8%	64.7%	47.8%	52.2%	25.4

The actual population included in this study numbered 1,391; the two groups--high school freshman experience completers and postsecondary freshman experience completers--respectively numbered 550 and 841. In an effort to make the samples more comparable, only recent high school graduates from the years 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 were included in the postsecondary completers sample.

*Design*

The design of this study used an archival approach for investigating the association, if any, of offering a freshman experience program for college-bound students prior to their high school graduation. These high school students were compared to a similar group of students who enrolled in the same course upon entering college. In assessing the impact of this program, the investigation focused on the following variables:

1. the dates of application for regular college admission;
2. the dates new student orientation programs were completed;
3. collegiate class attendance rates;
4. the number of courses dropped during the 1st semester of college enrollment;

5. the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of college enrollment;
6. the number of times the major course of study was changed during the 1st semester of enrollment, if any; and
7. the collegiate, cumulative grade point average (GPA).

These factors were selected based on their relevance to the course content of the freshman experience program.

### *Data Collection*

In an effort to avoid the possibility of biased opinions that might be associated with survey responses, this study made use of actual dates and numbers related to the variables as recorded in the Tennessee Board of Regents' Student Information System (SIS) database. The data were collected through a computer program that was developed to extract the specific information needed for this study. Once the data had been extracted, they were maintained on a personal computer and analyzed using the SPSS Base statistical package.

Data were extracted for each of 4 academic years based on fall semester statistics. The students who comprised the population were those who had graduated from high school in the same calendar year as that of the identified fall semester academic year. Individual student data were extracted using student identification numbers that were unique to each student. The student data were then assigned to one of two groups based upon the time of enrollment in the freshman experience program. Those students who had completed the freshman experience program on an advanced studies basis, in that they were still enrolled in high school, were assigned to Group 1 and called the high school freshman experience completers. Those students who enrolled in the freshman experience program during their 1st semester of college enrollment were assigned to Group 2 and called the postsecondary freshman experience completers. Student data were never tracked by student names. Only group numbers were imported into SPSS.

## *Methodology*

Prior to taking any action toward completing this study, I contacted the president of Walters State Community College for permission to use WSCC data (See Appendix A). The first step in the study was to identify variables that corresponded to the course material taught in the freshman experience program by reviewing a standard course syllabus (See Appendix B). The second step was to match these variables with definitive data that were maintained in the SIS (Student Information System) database. These steps were sequenced as follows: The course content of the freshman experience program addresses the importance of applying for college early; this concept was assessed by looking at the dates of application for regular college admission. The content also introduces various enrollment statuses including the advanced studies program that encompasses dual enrollment; this concept was investigated by looking at the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis. The importance of class attendance is stressed in the freshman experience program; this concept was assessed by looking at class attendance patterns or the number of absences recorded for each student for each class attended. A time management component is included in the freshman experience program; this concept was investigated by identifying the number of courses dropped during the 1st semester of enrollment. The freshman experience program also has a study skills component; this concept was assessed by looking at the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of enrollment and the cumulative GPA.

The final step involved the formation of null hypotheses that stated that there were no differences between high school freshman experience completers and postsecondary freshman experience completers in the areas cited above. Stated in the null form, the hypotheses outlined below were investigated in this study:

Ho1: There is no difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

- Ho2: There is no difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.
- Ho3: There is no difference in the collegiate class number of absences between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.
- Ho4: There is no difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment.
- Ho5: There is no difference in the number of courses failed at the college level between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.
- Ho6: There is no difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

### *Data Analysis*

A univariate approach was involved in the analyses of the previously listed variables: the chi-square. Each variable was evaluated separately through the use of the test statistic needed for the scale of measurement involved.

The statistical procedures are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 and the findings thus generated are presented.



## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study focused on whether or not students who have completed a freshman experience course designed to ease the transition from high school to postsecondary education while still in high school engage in more actions that positively impact retention than do those who have not had such training prior to college enrollment. The population included in the study numbered 1,391 students who enrolled at Walters State Community College immediately following high school graduation during the fall semesters of 2001 through 2004. This population was divided in two distinct groups--those who had completed a freshman experience class prior to high school graduation and those who completed an identical course upon college enrollment. Nondegree-seeking or “special” students and “transient” students who were not expected to return to college in ensuing semesters were excluded.

Those students who completed the freshman experience course during high school were identified as high school completers, and those who completed the course during their 1st semester of enrollment in college were identified as postsecondary completers. The high school completers, who numbered 550, comprised 39.54% of the population; and the postsecondary completers, who numbered 841, comprised 60.46% of the population.

#### *Analysis of Research Questions*

##### *Research Question #1*

Is there a difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Ho1: There is no difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at

the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

High school completers and postsecondary completers were divided into three groups based upon the dates of their initial application for regular college admission. Those students who made application for college admission prior to May 1 (more than 3 months prior to the beginning of the 1st day of classes) were included in Group 1. Those students who made application for admission between May 1 and July 31 (less than 3 months but more than 1 month before the 1st day of class) were included in Group 2. In addition, Group 3 included those students who made application for admission on August 1 or beyond, translating into less than 1 month prior to the 1st day of classes or during the late registration period that extends through the 1st week of classes. As an application date must be recorded for each applicant, there were no missing cases for this variable. The grouping variable was type of freshman experience program: (a) freshman experience program completed at the high school level versus (b) freshman experience program completed upon college enrollment. The frequencies and accompanying percentages, of high school completers and postsecondary completers in each group are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Crosstabulated Table for the Initial Dates College Applications for Regular Enrollment are Submitted by Type of Freshman Experience Program*

	High School		Postsecondary		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Application Date:						
Prior to May 1	59	10.7	76	9.0	135	9.7
May 1 to July 31	260	47.3	328	39.0	588	42.3
August 1 and Later	<u>231</u>	<u>42.0</u>	<u>437</u>	<u>52.0</u>	<u>668</u>	<u>48.0</u>
Total	550	100.0	841	100.0	1,391	100.0

As shown in Table 2, approximately 60% of high school completers submitted applications for regular enrollment more than 1 month prior to the 1st day of classes, whereas more than half, or 52%, of postsecondary completers submitted applications for regular college enrollment less than 1 month prior to the 1st day of classes.

A chi-square test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment were submitted by students who completed a freshman experience program during the senior year of high school as compared to those who completed such a program during the 1st semester of their postsecondary enrollment. The chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2 (2) = 13.23, p < .01$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Generally, high school completers made application for college earlier than did postsecondary completers.

Figure 1 shows the bar graphs for the dates college applications for regular enrollment were submitted by the two groups.

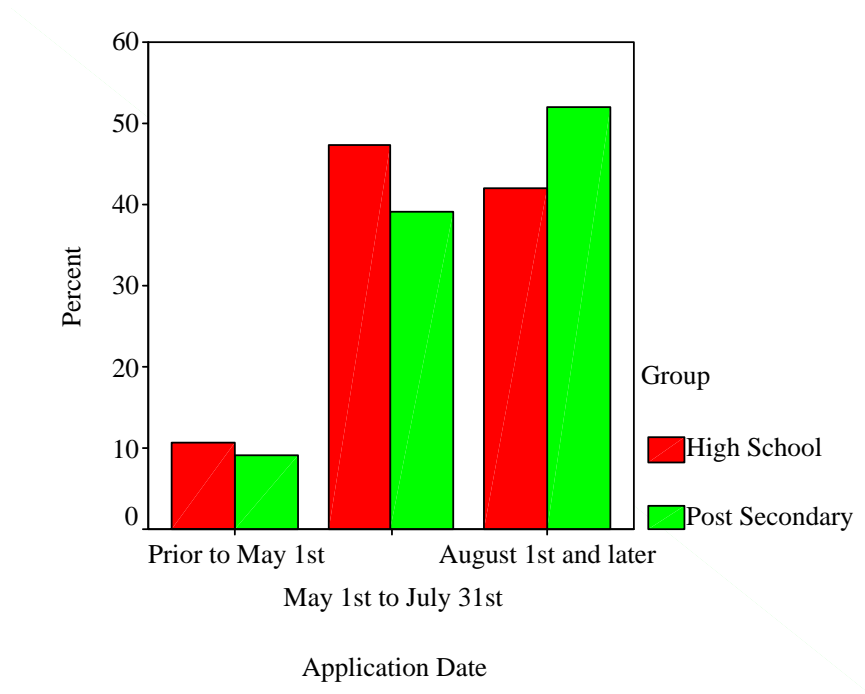


Figure 1. Dates College Applications for Regular Enrollment Were Submitted

## *Research Question #2*

Is there a difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Ho2: There is no difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

A chi-square test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the difference in the number of advanced studies college credits earned based on the type of freshman experience program completed: (a) freshman experience program completed at the high school level versus (b) freshman experience program completed upon college enrollment. The test variable was the number of advanced studies college credit hours earned at three levels: (a) 4 credit hours or less, which equated to one course; (b) 5 to 7 credit hours, which equated to two courses and (c) 8 or more credit hours, which equated to three or more courses. In an effort to preclude a skewed distribution and as the freshman experience course defined the grouping variable, the 1 credit hour awarded for completion of this program was excluded from the high school completers' sample. Consequently, the total advanced studies credit hours earned included in this study was credits earned prior to regular college enrollment minus the freshman experience course that was completed by only one group prior to regular college enrollment.

The chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 5.79, p = .05$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, high school completers of the freshman experience program completed significantly more advanced studies credits than did postsecondary completers.

As shown in Table 3, 167 of the 550 high school completers, or 30% of the total sample, completed advanced studies college credits other than the freshman experience program prior to regular college enrollment, whereas only 66 of 841 postsecondary completers, or 7.8% of the total sample, completed advanced studies college credits prior to regular enrollment.

Furthermore, had the 1 hour college credit awarded for the completion of the advanced studies program been included in the high school completers' total hours, the chi-square statistic would have been significant at a much higher level. Additionally, Table 3 illustrates that 32.3% of the students who completed the freshman experience program at the high school level earned 8 or more advanced studies college credit hours compared to only 16.7% of the students whose freshman experience program was completed upon college enrollment. Also, many of the students included at this level were, in actuality, full-time students enrolled in 12 or more hours.

Table 3

*Crosstabulated Table for Number of College Credits Earned on an Advanced Studies Basis by Type of Freshman Experience Program*

	High School		Postsecondary		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Credit Hours:						
4 or fewer	40	24.0	20	30.3	60	25.8
5 – 7	73	43.7	35	53.0	108	46.4
8 or more	<u>54</u>	<u>32.3</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>16.7</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>27.9</u>
Total	167	100.0	66	100.0	233	100.0

Figure 2 shows the distribution of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between the two groups.

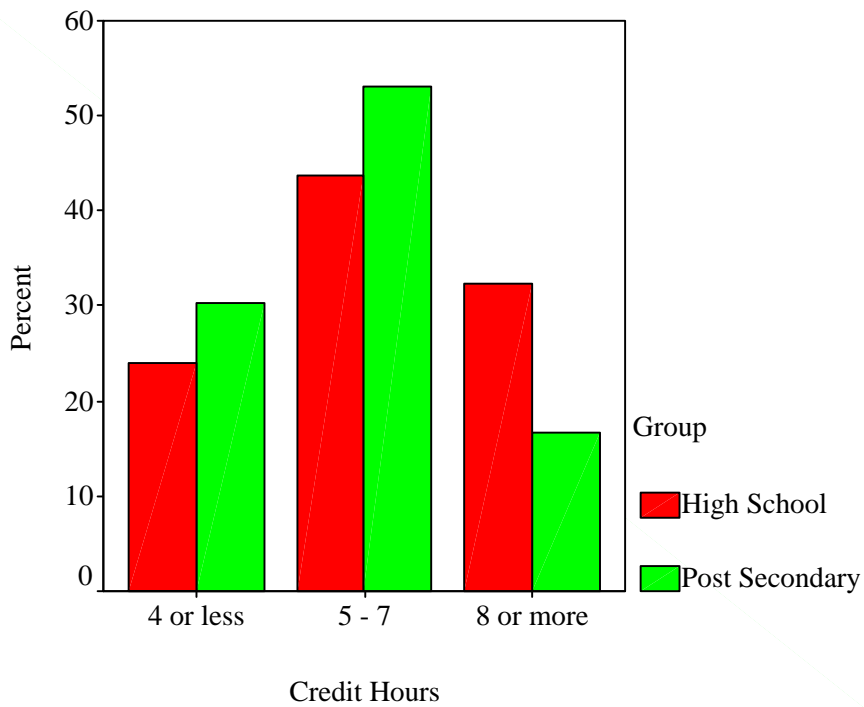


Figure 2. Distribution of College Credits Earned on an Advanced Studies Basis Between the Two Groups

*Research Question #3*

Is there a difference in the collegiate class number of absences at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Ho3: There is no difference in the collegiate class number of absences between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

Students who completed the freshman experience course at the high school level and those who completed the course at the postsecondary level were divided into four groups based on collegiate class number of absences, specifically total absences within a semester for all

courses. The four levels were (a) those with 5 or fewer; (b) those with between 6 and 10; (c) those with 11 to 15 absences; and (d) those with 16 or more. This study included students who were enrolled full time with a minimum of 12 credit hours as well as those who were enrolled in more than 18 credit hours. Enrollment in more than 18 credit hours requires special permission from college administrators. A relational assumption was made that the majority of full-time students were enrolled in an average of five courses or 15 credit hours. As a result, the levels used in this analysis were respectively defined as: (a) one absence per class per semester; (b) two absences per class per semester; (c) three absences per class per semester; or (d) four or more absences per class per semester.

A chi-square test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the differences in the collegiate class number of absences between those students who completed a freshman experience program at the high school level as compared to those who completed such a program at the postsecondary level. The chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 64.40, p < .01$ ; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the test statistic revealed a significant difference in the collegiate class number of absences between those who completed a freshman experience course in high school and those who completed the course during the 1st semester of their college career.

Specifically, high school completers had significantly fewer absences than did postsecondary completers. This significance is depicted in Table 4, in that almost half, or 48.7%, of those who had completed the freshman experience course at the high school level had five or fewer absences during their 1st semester of college enrollment compared to less than one third, or 29.3%, of the postsecondary completers.

Table 4

*Crosstabulated Table for Collegiate Class Number of Absences by Type of Freshman Experience Program*

	High School		Postsecondary		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Absences:						
5 or fewer	268	48.7	246	29.3	514	37.0
6 to 10	118	21.5	182	21.6	300	21.6
11 to 15	53	9.6	121	14.4	174	12.5
16 or more	<u>111</u>	<u>20.2</u>	<u>292</u>	<u>34.7</u>	<u>403</u>	<u>29.0</u>
Total	550	100.0	841	100.0	1391	100.0

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of collegiate class absences between the two groups.

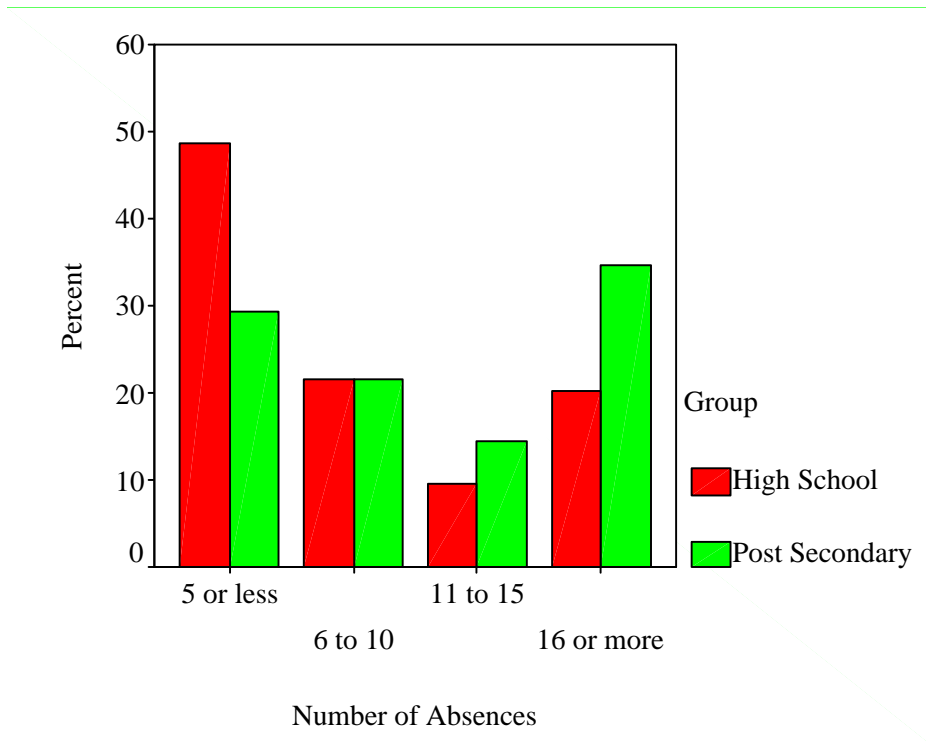


Figure 3. Distribution of Collegiate Class Absences Between the Two Groups



#### *Research Question #4*

Is there a difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Ho4: There is no difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment.

A chi-square test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the differences between the number of course withdrawals made within the 1st semester of collegiate enrollment between those who completed a freshman experience course during high school as compared to those who completed such a program during the 1st semester of their college enrollment. The test variable was the number of course withdrawal with three levels: (a) those who did not withdraw from any courses, (b) those who withdrew from only one course, and (c) those who had more than one course withdrawal. Again, the grouping variable was the type of freshman experience program: (a) course completed during high school or (b) course completed during the 1st semester of college enrollment.

The chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2 (2) = 21.59, p < .01$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, those students who enrolled in a freshman experience course in high school had significantly fewer course withdrawals than did students who enrolled in the program during college.

As illustrated in Table 5, 61.8% of high school completers as compared to 49.6% of postsecondary completers did not have any course withdrawals. Additionally, postsecondary completers had more course withdrawals than did high school completers at each of the two remaining levels--respectively 29% compared to 24% withdrew from one course and 21.4% compared to 14.2% withdrew from two or more courses.

Table 5

*Crosstabulated Table for Number of Course Withdrawals by Type of Freshman Experience Program*

	High School		Postsecondary		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Withdrawals:						
None	340	61.8	417	49.6	757	54.4
One	132	24.0	244	29.0	376	27.0
Two or more	<u>78</u>	<u>14.2</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>21.4</u>	<u>258</u>	<u>18.5</u>
Total	550	100.0	841	100.0	1,391	100.0

Figure 4 depicts the bar graphs for number of course withdrawals by type of freshman experience program.

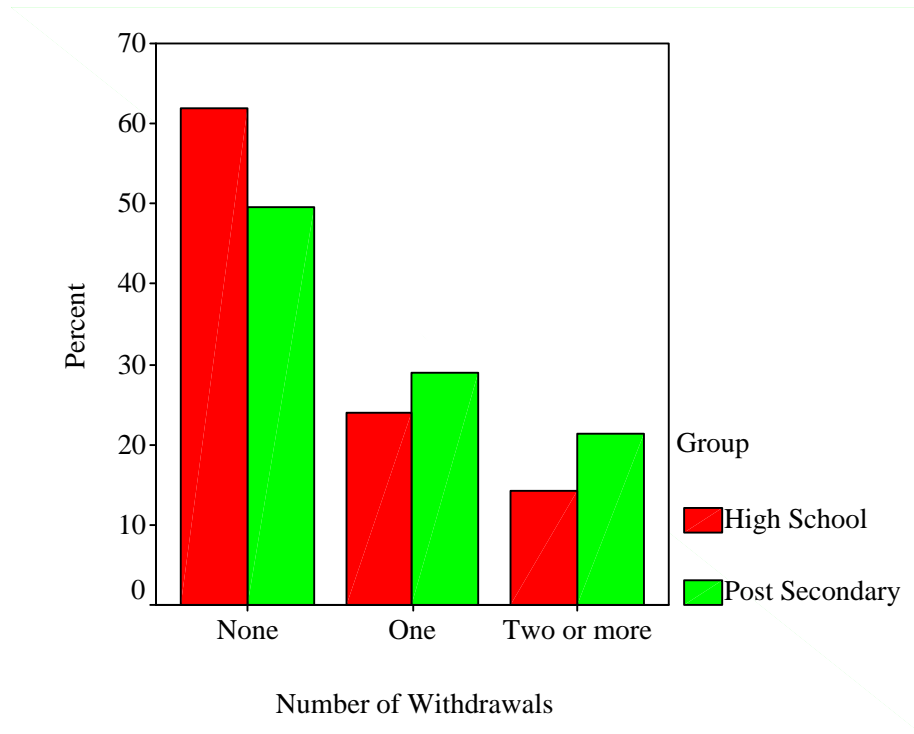


Figure 4. Number of Course Withdrawals by Type of Freshman Experience Program

*Research Question #5*

Is there a difference in the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of college enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Ho5: There is no difference in the number of courses failed at the college level between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

High school and postsecondary completers of the freshman experience course were divided into three groups based on the number of courses failed during their 1st semester of college enrollment: (a) those with zero course failures, (b) those with only one failure, and (c) those with two or more course failures. The frequencies and associated percentages of secondary and postsecondary completers in each group are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Crosstabulated Table for Number of Courses Failed by Type of Freshman Experience Program*

	High School		Postsecondary		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Failures:						
None	451	82.0	579	68.8	1,030	74.0
One	43	7.8	116	13.8	159	11.4
Two or more	<u>56</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>146</u>	<u>17.4</u>	<u>202</u>	<u>14.5</u>
Total	550	100.0	841	100.0	1,391	100.0

A chi-square test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the difference in the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of full-time enrollment between those who

completed a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who completed such a program during the 1st semester of college enrollment. The chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2 (2) = 29.96, p < .01$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, high school completers of the freshman experience program had significantly fewer course failures during their 1st semester of college enrollment than did postsecondary completers of the program.

As shown in Table 6, 82% of those students who completed the freshman experience course during high school did not have any failures whereas 68.8% of postsecondary completers of the freshman experience class had no failures. Additionally, postsecondary completers had more course failures than did high school completers at each of the remaining levels-- respectively 13.8% compared to 7.8% failed one course and 17.4% compared to 10.2% failed two or more courses.

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of course failures by the type of freshman experience program.

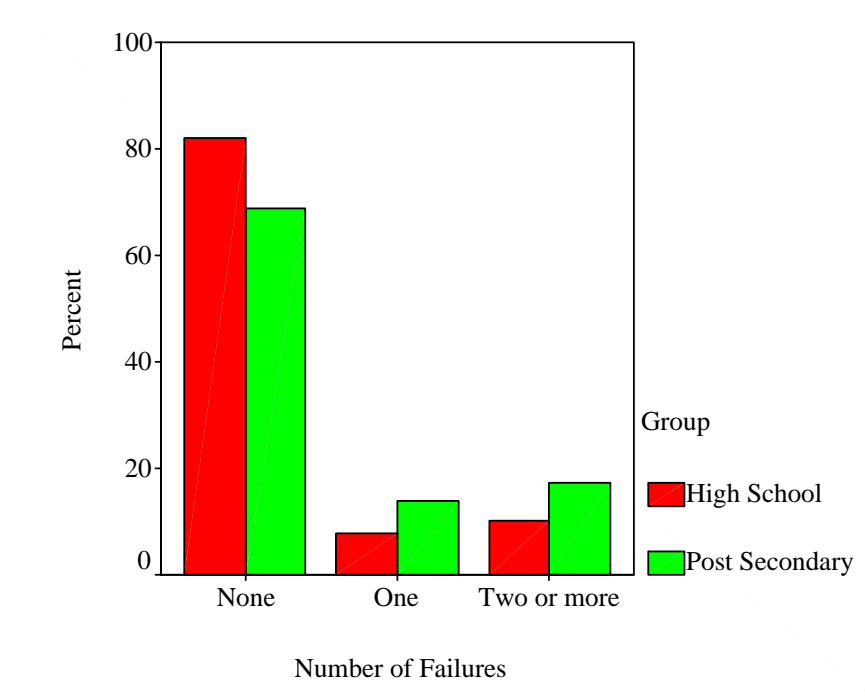


Figure 5. Distribution of Course Failures by the Type of Freshman Experience Program

### *Research Question #6*

Is there a difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Ho6: There is no difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program at the college level.

A chi-square test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the difference in collegiate, cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment based on students who completed a freshman experience program at the high school level versus those who completed such a program at the postsecondary level. The test variable was the collegiate, cumulative GPAs assigned to four levels as follows: (a) 0 - 1.9, (b) 2.0 – 2.9, (c) 3.0 – 3.5, and (d) 3.6 – 4.0. These levels were developed in an effort to distinguish the highest and lowest achievers. This method of grouping, in essence, represents the following averages: (a) F – D, (b) C, (c) B- - B, and (d) B+ - A average.

The chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 26.71, p < .01$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the test statistic revealed that high school completers of the freshman experience program earned higher GPAs at all levels of the breakdown used in this study than did postsecondary completers of the same program.

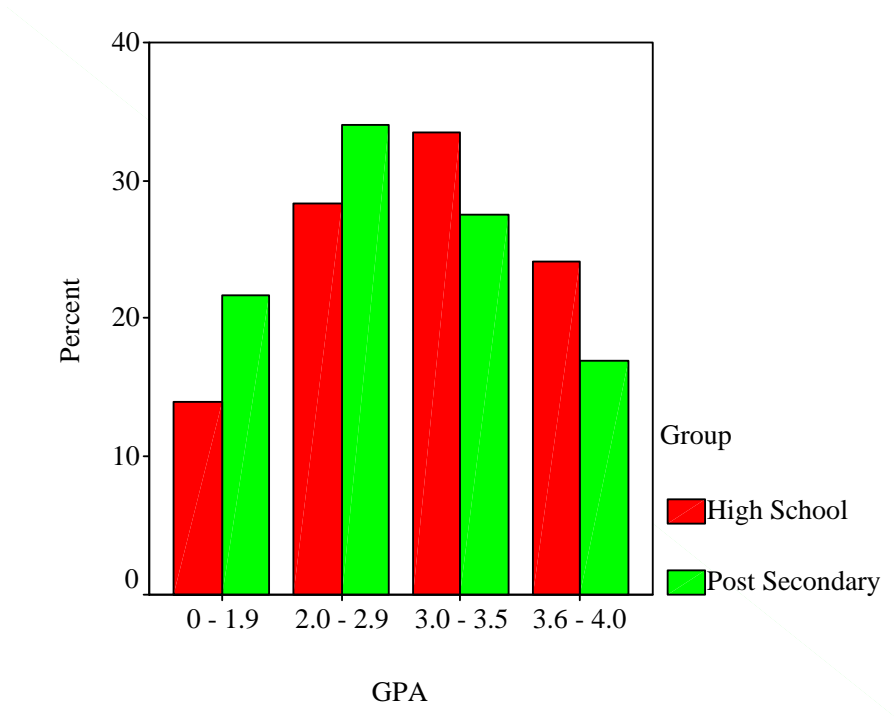
As shown in Table 7, 33.5% of those who took such a course while still in high school maintained a B- to B average, or 3.0 – 3.5, compared to only 27.5% of those who took the course during the 1st semester of their college enrollment. Additionally, 24.2% of secondary completers earned a GPA between 3.6 - 4.0, whereas only 16.9% of postsecondary completers achieved a GPA within the B+ - A range. In a similar vein, more postsecondary completers had C and F to D averages than did high school completers--respectively, 34% had C averages compared to 28.4%, and 21.6% had less than a C average compared to 14.0%.

Table 7

*Crosstabulated Table for Collegiate, Cumulative GPA by Type of Freshman Experience Program*

	High School		Postsecondary		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
GPA:						
0 to 1.9	77	14.0	182	21.6	259	18.6
2.0 to 2.9	156	28.4	286	34.0	442	31.8
3.0 to 3.5	184	33.5	231	27.5	415	29.8
3.6 to 4.0	<u>133</u>	<u>24.2</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>16.9</u>	<u>275</u>	<u>19.8</u>
Total	550	100.0	841	100.0	1,391	100.0

Figure 6 displays the bar graph representations of collegiate, cumulative GPA by type of freshman experience program.



*Figure 6.* Representations of Collegiate, Cumulative GPA by Type of Freshman Experience Program

The findings from the variables outlined in this chapter are reviewed in Chapter 5. The conclusions consequent to this study as well as implications for practice and recommendations for future research are included in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

*Summary*

Research abounds to confirm the lack of academic rigor that exists in the curricula of most high school seniors and the immense need for an improved transition between high school and postsecondary endeavors (Sachs, 1998; Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2001). Although the number of graduating high school seniors who aspire to complete a college degree is at its highest, over one fourth of university freshmen and more than 50% of freshmen at 2-year institutions fail to return even for a 2nd year (Barth et al., 2001). Too often, students tend to stall out, rather than continue in progression toward program completion. Researchers have cited numerous documented factors known to interfere with students' transition into postsecondary endeavors (Bailey et al., 2002; Frost, 2003; Haslam & Rubenstein, 2000; Howard & Jones, 2000; Plucker et al., 2006; Tinto, 1988; Tinto, 1996b). This move from the high school setting to that of a postsecondary environment is rife with challenges and difficulties. However, there are strategies that can be implemented to promote a more successful transition.

An abundance of research exists to document the various efforts of postsecondary institutions to counter the uncertainties associated with the transition from high school to the postsecondary level (Barefoot, 2000; Chapman & Reed, 1987; Cuseo, 1997; "Freshman Seminars," 2006; Howard & Jones, 2000; Rhodes & Carifio, 1999; Sanders & Burton, 1996; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999). However, studies of such efforts implemented within the high school setting are not recorded in the literature. McCabe (2005) called for a movement within community colleges to work with high schools in their efforts to prepare students for success in college thereby addressing such preparations prior to collegiate enrollment; however, his



statement was only a call for action and, as such, was not substantiated by successful programs that had already been implemented.

At Walters State Community College (WSCC), the need to ease the transition from high school to postsecondary education was recognized by the president and several key administrators. Even though they were not aware of comparable programs that could be replicated, they dedicated themselves to developing and implementing a freshman experience course that was focused on providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to combat the strains associated with the 1st semester of college enrollment. It was their belief that students who entered college equipped with such knowledge and skills would be more successful. Consequently, they developed the curriculum, secured the funding, and identified personnel and other needed resource for undertaking the unprecedented program. The course content focused on introducing topics such as college opportunities, procedures, resources, and services. The curriculum included activities that addressed personal enhancement and development, academic skills, career possibilities, and other success-related topics (Walters State Community College Catalog, 2000-2001).

WSCC piloted this course in 1993. As funds were limited, the program was introduced in only two high schools and was made available for high school seniors only. When the program was completed, an informal assessment was conducted. Based upon the positive responses of the students and the convictions of the personnel involved, additional funding was secured and the program was expanded in ensuing years.

### *Conclusions*

In this study, data were collected and analyzed to investigate whether students who successfully completed a freshman experience course while still in high school engaged in more actions that positively impacted their collegiate program than those who had not completed such a course prior to their 1st semester of college enrollment. The population of this study was located at Walters State Community College (WSCC) and involved 1,391 students from 23 high

schools in East Tennessee. Each of these students graduated from one of WSCC's service delivery area high schools and enrolled as first-time, full-time college freshmen the following fall.

There were two grouping variables in this study: (a) those who completed a freshman experience course in high school and (b) those who completed a freshman experience course at the postsecondary level. The study was guided by six research questions. The findings of this study are noteworthy in light of the significant differences that were found in each of the research questions applied.

### *Research Question #1*

Is there a difference in the initial dates college applications for regular enrollment are submitted between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

The results indicated that those who completed a freshman experience program at the high school level made application for college earlier than did their postsecondary counterparts. Over half of the high school completers (nearly 60%) completed the application process more than a month preceding the 1st day of class. Conversely, over half of the postsecondary completers postponed completing the application process until less than 1 month prior to the 1st day of class.

Clearly, the first step toward postsecondary enrollment is the application itself. As a result, the earlier the application process is completed, the earlier the subsequent procedures for registration and enrollment can be completed. Thus, it can be implied that an early start to the application process yields earlier academic advisement and course registration that should bring about a sense of preparedness for the inauguration to a postsecondary setting. In this study, the high school completers demonstrated a greater awareness of such processes, as demonstrated by their earlier application dates.

Completing the application process with less than 1 month until the 1st day of class or even during the 1st week of class, coined as “late registration,” can leave less time to accomplish a number of time-consuming procedures and potentially intensify feelings of being ill-equipped. The results of this study revealed that 52% of postsecondary completers finalized the application process on or after August 1, less than a month prior to the 1st day of class; thus, they were less prepared for the procedures associated with enrollment that in most cases are time-sensitive in nature. Consequently, they were confronted with less flexibility in defining their schedules and participating in activities.

### *Research Question #2*

Is there a difference in the number of college credits earned on an advanced studies basis between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

The results of this study showed that a significantly larger number of high school completers earned college credits, other than the 1 hour credit awarded for the completion of the freshman experience course prior to full-time college enrollment, than did the postsecondary completers. Specifically, they earned 22% more credits. Even more noteworthy, the results showed that 32.3% of high school completers compared to merely 16.7% of postsecondary completers had earned 8 or more college credit hours on an advanced studies basis prior to full-time college enrollment.

The freshman experience course in itself, when delivered to high school students, is an introduction to advanced studies opportunities. Completion of college courses on an advanced studies basis provides students with a heightened awareness of the collegiate environment in general and its inherent academic rigor, as well as providing an increased sense of confidence toward the concept of college as a whole. Analysis, as determined by Bailey et al. (2003), indicated that advanced studies coursework has the promise of improving college preparation, acclimating high school students to a college setting, and enhancing the success of students upon

full-time enrollment in college. Additionally, the completion of advanced studies coursework lends itself to providing increased opportunities for time on a college campus. Therefore, it can be inferred that ancillary exposure to the collegiate environment via advanced studies courses serves as a transition tool in itself.

### *Research Question #3*

Is there a difference in the collegiate class number of absences at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

There was a significant difference found in the collegiate class number of absences between high school completers and postsecondary completers, with the greatest differences between the two groups occurring in the ranges of 5 or fewer absences and 16 or more absences. Approximately 50% of high school completers had five or fewer cumulative absences within their 1st semester of full-time enrollment. This is an outstanding attendance rate in its own right, but it is especially noteworthy when compared to the less than 30% of postsecondary completers who attained the same attendance rate. Additionally, the results of this study showed that approximately 35% of postsecondary completers had 16 or more absences.

Without question, class attendance is a key element in students' academic success. Based on the statistics provided by this study it appears that those students who completed the freshman experience course prior to high school graduation entered their 1st semester of collegiate enrollment with a superior grasp on the value of attending classes as compared to those students within the postsecondary completers group. The significant difference in absences between the two groups could be attributed to the emphasis placed on class attendance, as outlined within the freshman experience curriculum, or to the collegiate experience and the knowledge gained by the high school completers. In a similar study, Bailey et al. (2002) noted in their follow-up study of students who completed college courses prior to high school graduation, that a majority of

respondents contributed their awareness of the importance of attendance to their participation in collegiate courses while still in high school.

#### *Research Question #4*

Is there a difference in the number of course withdrawals at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

Again, the findings revealed a significant difference between the two groups, with the high school completers having significantly fewer course withdrawals than did those students who completed the freshman experience course during their 1st semester of college enrollment. To analyze data for this question, the number of course withdrawals were divided into three groups: (a) those who did not withdraw from any courses, (b) those who withdrew from only one course, and (c) those who had more than one course withdrawal. High school completers did not have any course withdrawals whereas less than 50% of postsecondary completers did not withdraw from any courses. In addition, postsecondary completers had more course withdrawals at both subsequent levels than did their counterparts in the high school completers group. These research findings are similar to those found in a 4-year study performed by Sidle and McReynolds (1999) that compared students who completed a university's freshman-year experience course with those who had not completed such a course. The Sidle and McReynolds study showed that students who participated in the course had "higher ratios of earned credit hours in relation to the number of credit hours attempted than those students who did not take such a course" (p. 293).

The notably lower rates of course withdrawals within the high school completers group compared to the postsecondary completers group yielded a variety of suggested assumptions. A primary reason for course withdrawal is probable failure as students are typically encouraged to withdraw from a course rather than receive an "F" grade that indicates course failure. Another leading motive for course withdrawal is associated with students' uncertainty surrounding a

chosen major or program of study. Thus, when a major program of study is determined after enrollment in courses but early in the semester, some of the originally opted courses may not fit within the outlined requirements for the newly selected major; consequently, course withdrawal becomes the most viable option. Factors such as the circumstances described above are encompassed in the content of the freshman experience course. Thus, the high school completers have been introduced to the study skills needed to ensure academic success and have been privy to the information needed to make informed decisions relative to a major area of study choice, and, ultimately, class selection prior to the start of their 1st semester of collegiate enrollment. This assumption is supported by the findings of an Ohio University study involving completers of a college orientation course that revealed over 50% of participants cited assistance in choosing a major and in career preparation as being major benefits of the course (Chapman & Reed, 1987).

#### *Research Question #5*

Is there a difference in the number of courses failed during the 1st semester of college enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

The results of the chi-square test used for this research question showed that the high school completers had significantly fewer course failures during their 1st semester of college enrollment than did postsecondary completers, with 82% of high school completers not having any failures compared to 68.8% of postsecondary completers not having any failures. Of the postsecondary completers, 13.8% compared to 7.8% of high school completers had only one failure, and 17.4% of postsecondary completers versus only 10.2 % of high school completers had two or more failures within the 1st semester.

Again, high school completers of the freshman experience program greet the 1st semester of college armed with study skills, time management strategies, note-taking methods, as well as other success promoting directives, when compared to those postsecondary completers who are

exposed to such information only after being immersed into their 1st semester of college enrollment. As noted in the Ohio University study, participants of a college orientation course included “increased awareness of university resources” and being “more comfortable in their new environment knowing they could ask questions and discuss problems with a resource person in a seminar setting,” as the most frequently cited benefits of the course (Chapman & Reed, 1987, p. 179).

### *Research Question #6*

Is there a difference in the collegiate, cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment between students who complete a freshman experience program at the high school level and those who complete a comparable program upon college enrollment?

The data analysis revealed that high school completers of the freshman experience course had significantly higher collegiate, cumulative GPAs at the end of the 1st semester of college enrollment than did the postsecondary completers of the freshman experience program. Of high school completers, 57.7% were able to maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA with 24.2% of those preserving a 3.6 – 4.0 GPA. Only 16.9% of the postsecondary completers earned a GPA between 3.6 and 4.0. Similarly, 55.6% of postsecondary completers earned a GPA of 2.9 or lower with 21.6% earning between 0 and 1.9. Those who completed the freshman experience course while still in high school earned higher GPAs at all levels of the breakdown used in this study as compared with postsecondary completers. The professional literature overwhelmingly substantiated the relationship between participation in a freshman experience course and higher GPAs (Chapman & Reed, 1987; Fidler & Hunter, 1990; Glass & Garret, 1995; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999). Plucker et al. (2006) specifically addressed students who enrolled in college courses while still in high school and reported that students who participated in such programs earned higher grades in college than did those who were not involved in such programs.

Comparable to the significant difference found in the number of course failures between these two groups, it could also be inferred that many of the skills and strategies taught in the freshman experience course played a role in the overwhelming academic success of the high school completers group in regard to cumulative GPAs. Prior exposure to collegiate-level work along with a repertoire of tactics to further freshman success seemingly places high school completers at an advantage from the 1st day of college classes; whereas, the converse group, postsecondary completers, are engrossed in the collegiate experience while simultaneously receiving success related knowledge imparted in the freshman experience course.

Such findings provide credibility for the basis of conducting this analysis; of even greater importance, the findings form a foundation for the continued implementation of such a program as well as the development of expanded initiatives that should significantly ease the transition from high school to postsecondary education for first-time college freshmen. Furthermore, by maintaining or further developing such a freshman experience program, a greater number of students will be engaging in the various elements associated with 1st semester success that should ultimately yield a positive impact on retention.

### *Implications for Practice*

Equipped with the realization that successfully completing the 1st semester of postsecondary enrollment is indicative of persistence and degree completion, and given the fact that significant associations between the variables reviewed within this research and student success within the 1st semester have been identified in this study, Walters State Community College and its service area high schools should further address the needs of graduating high school seniors entering college the semester following high school graduation by reviewing the findings generated by this study. Supervisors, administrators, faculty members, and staff at both the high school and postsecondary levels should be made aware of the potential impact that the timing of a freshman experience course can make. They should be encouraged to consider course offerings outside the traditional academic realm and delivery mode and be open to a



course that has proven beneficial and, ultimately, has served the purpose of facilitating freshmen success by better preparing students for the transition from high school to postsecondary endeavors. Stakeholders at both levels--high schools and postsecondary institutions--should realize that access to the knowledge and skills needed to make a successful transition beyond high school are of equal importance, or even greater importance, than high school GPAs or standardized test scores. Students should be alerted to the differences between a high school environment and that of a college setting and be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to not only confront the accompanying challenges but also successfully overcome them.

The results of this study should prove pertinent to college personnel and should intensify their awareness of this population of students--first-time, traditional college freshmen. College administrators have long been made aware of the magnitude of the 1st semester of college and its role in students' success and persistence. For most institutions, that awareness has failed to reach beyond the boundaries of college campuses in any proactive efforts. However, this study confirms the benefits of undertaking a proactive effort, namely providing a freshman experience course to college-bound high school seniors and the related, improved success within the 1st semester of college. This information alone will not aid in better preparing incoming freshmen for the challenges that lie ahead during the upcoming transition. Instead, college administrators must cultivate relationships with their service area high schools and work collaboratively to develop and implement such courses at the high school level.

Furthermore, this study provides high school supervisors, administrators, faculty, and staff with an abundance of relevant information concerning the toils associated with a high school senior class. High school officials are saturated with the awareness of "senioritis," "the senior slump," and various other appellations given to the lack of interest, effort, usefulness, and rigor that many students associate with the senior year of high school. For most high schools, that awareness has failed to develop into any type of combative measure aimed at better equipping students for life after high school. Based on the findings of this study, high school

officials should enthusiastically work in partnership with local postsecondary institutions to implement such a freshman experience program in an effort to add relevant, substantive coursework to the curriculum while bridging the gap between high school and postsecondary institutions.

Finally, business, industry, and communities in general must realize the need for such collaborative efforts between high schools and colleges and must insist on such partnerships. The economy of our global communities demands a citizenry that is educated beyond the high school level. The consequences of allowing a gap between high schools and postsecondary institutions that inhibit our students from achieving program completion could prove detrimental. Therefore, state and federal policymakers along with community agencies such as P-16 councils, should combine their efforts to facilitate a collaborative initiative such as a freshman experience program offered to college-bound high school seniors during their senior year of high school in an attempt to ultimately produce a more educated citizenry.

The goal of a freshman experience course is to introduce students to aspects of the college environment and equip them with the needed knowledge and skills to prevail over the ensuing challenges. This study yielded an insight into the association between the timing of completing a freshman experience course and various success factors related to the 1st semester of college. In combination, these efforts should yield a more productive and practical senior year experience that, in turn, should assist in easing the transition to college and ultimately enhancing the success of college freshmen. Invoking the following strategies could have an overwhelming impact on the initial success of college-bound high school students that, ultimately, lends itself to increased persistence and degree completion. The strategies recommended for practice include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Walters State Community College should continue to offer the freshman experience course to college-bound high school seniors enrolled in its 23 service area high schools. College administrators should work in collaboration with high school

- officials to expand this program in an effort to provide more students with the opportunity to participate in such a course.
2. Walters State Community College should develop and implement a program designed to target and track their first-time freshman who enroll in a freshman experience course during the 1st semester of full-time enrollment. Such a program could be helpful in an effort to identify and counter factors that might hinder academic success for these students.
  3. Other institutions of higher education should incorporate a program into their curricula comparable to that currently being offered at Walters State Community College.
  4. With a growing number of students completing their high school requirements through home schooling, Walters State Community College and other institutions of higher education should investigate the options available to provide this population of students with the opportunity to take such a course. Colleges should attempt to collaborate with local home school agencies to provide those high school seniors with an avenue in which to participate in this type of course alongside other college-bound high school seniors.
  5. The typical college orientation program, at least at the institution used within this research study, typically lasts 4 hours. College administrators should revamp and expand such an orientation program to incorporate the concepts of a freshman experience program comparable to the one reviewed in this study. A 2-day orientation program would allow a brief introduction to the topics included in the aforementioned program. This revised program should then be offered, and possibly made mandatory, for incoming freshmen students including both traditional and nontraditional students who have not had the types of exposure provided through the freshman experience course.

6. As it is evident that seamless transitions between all levels of education advances success, it appears that it would be in the forefront of interests for P-16 councils to promote the collaboration of high schools and postsecondary institutions with regard to implementing a freshman experience program. P-16 councils should explore avenues of funding for such exposure to advanced studies courses, specifically a freshman experience course, as this study has confirmed that exposure to college while still in high school makes a significant difference in 1st semester success.
7. State policy makers should investigate the feasibility of incorporating such a course into the required high school curriculum, and, where viable, require such a course within the mandated program of study. If mandating such a course is not possible, it should indubitably be recommended, and, in such instances, high school administrators should voluntarily incorporate such a course into their curricula.
8. For those high schools and colleges that adopt a freshman experience course as a curricular requirement, the staff responsible for administering the program should receive specific training that addresses the importance of the program, the course content, the importance of transmitting the benefits of program completion, as well as other related topics.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

It is the charge of policymakers, the responsibility of community members, and the duty of educators at all levels to provide students with the best available educational opportunities. This vast obligation can only be achieved through a commitment to informed decision making that ultimately translates into a commitment to incessant research. It is critical that further research be conducted to evaluate potential freshman experience programs. Studies such as this one could be further refined by expanding various parameters associated with the research. Recommendations for future research include, but are not limited, to the following:

1. Studies such as this could be further extended by conducting qualitative studies of information gleaned from students who participated in a freshman experience course as high school seniors and those who participated in such a course during the 1st semester of their college career. Such a study would allow the researcher to evaluate the perceptions within each independent group.
2. As the findings of this study have been generated through examining the impact of such a course offered by a community college in a rural setting, further research should be conducted using a contrasting setting and institution. Specifically, this study should be replicated at the university level as well as analyzed to explore whether the impact would be the same in a more urban setting.
3. As this study incorporated freshman experience courses that were taught to high school seniors in a high school setting, it is palpable that such a study should be conducted to evaluate the impact that the setting of such of course could have. Replication of this study should be made to assess the impact of completing such a course as a high school senior in a high school setting as compared to students who travel to a college campus to complete the course.
4. In a similar vein, as the faculty members who taught the various sections of the freshman experience course specific to this study, at the high school level, were a mixture of full-time collegiate faculty members as well as adjunct faculty with some of the adjunct members serving as faculty members at the high schools concerned, additional research should be performed to assess the impact of the choice of faculty. Replication of this research should be performed to evaluate the association, if any, of employing high school faculty members to teach such a course on an adjunct basis versus using full-time collegiate faculty members as instructors for such a course.
5. Persistence and degree completion are nationwide concerns for all institutions of higher education; therefore, a retention-related research project between the two groups should yield invaluable insights. Such a study should be embarked upon to

- evaluate the impact of the timing of a freshman experience course on student retention in ensuing semesters or, of even greater importance, graduation.
6. A research project should be developed for a similar objective pertaining to nontraditional students. In particular, a study should address attributes of 1st semester success for nontraditional students who completed a 2-day extended orientation program versus those who did not complete such a program.

In summary, the data provided by this study support the position that the timing of completing the freshman experience course is central in fostering a seamless transition from high school to postsecondary endeavors. Such a smooth transition is essential to the success of first-time college students. Educators at both levels, who by the very nature of their profession should be concerned with providing curricular offerings that contribute to student success, should be made aware of the findings from this study. This awareness should, in turn, lead to more proactive efforts. Such efforts should prove beneficial for everyone involved both in the form of student success and professional fulfillment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Permission Letter to President of WSCC

April 7, 2006

Dr. Wade McCamey, President  
Walters State Community College  
500 S. Davy Crockett Parkway  
Morristown, TN 37813

Dear Dr. McCamey,

As a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Program I am currently working on the prospectus of my dissertation. I have elected to complete a study on the impact of a "Freshman Experience" program provided for college-bound high school students. To date, research pertaining to freshman experience or first-year seminar courses has focused primarily on only those students who take such a course at the post-secondary level. There is little to no research available on the impact of such a course taught at the secondary level; therefore, it is my intent to conduct such a study. Realizing that Walters State Community College is unique in its offering of such a course at the secondary level, it is my desire to extract WSCC data to use in this study. Without question, I am confident that this research would prove to be of value to both secondary and post-secondary institutions.

Please consider this correspondence as an official request to obtain WSCC data for my dissertation. Understanding that retrieving data from available records will provide more validity than surveys or questionnaires, I would like to request permission to review and extract information available on the Student Information System (SIS). Please be assured that all information obtained will be managed in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

I would like to request permission to study records associated with students enrolled in freshman experience courses as high school seniors as well as first semester college students during 2000-2001 academic year and continuing through the fall semester 2005. Additionally, I would also like to study records of a randomized sample population who took such a course during their first semester of college within the same academic years. Factors that I intend to review include: collegiate GPA, class attendance, course failures, number of times a major is changed, initial submission dates of college admission applications, graduation rates, initial application dates for financial aid, ACT test scores, registration dates, as well as various other demographic variables. You will find a draft copy of my proposed research questions attached.

I appreciate your willingness to assist with the research process and data extraction associated with my anticipated dissertation topic. Please be assured that I will be happy to share the results of my study with you and your faculty and staff at WSCC. If you have any questions or need additional information, you may reach me at (XXX) xxx-xxxx or [email address].

Once again, I appreciate your support and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Approved By:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Office of Planning, Research, & Assessment

\_\_\_\_\_  
Office of the President

Sincerely,

Amanda Johnson, Student  
Dept. of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

## APPENDIX B

### Walters State Community College Course Syllabus

**Course Name and Number:** Freshman Experience, EDUC 1010

**Semester and Year:**

**Instructor:**                   **Office:**  
   **Office Hours:**  
   **Phone:**  
**E-Mail:**   **Fax:**  
**Secretary's Phone:**

**SUPERVISOR CONTACT:** Dr. [Name], Department Head for Education

**OFFICE:** MBSS 136 **OFFICE HOURS:** Posted on office door

**PHONE:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**E-MAIL:** XXXX

**FAX:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**SECRETARY'S PHONE:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX [Name]

#### Required Text/Supplementary Materials

1. Textbook *Shaping College Pathways* (2005), 4th Edition
2. A good dictionary such as *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*
3. *Walters State Catalog and Student Handbook XXXX*
4. One inch ring notebook
5. Ample supply of plastic page covers

#### Catalog Course Description

Introduction to college opportunities, procedures, resources, and services. Topics include personal enhancement and development, improving academic skills, career possibilities, information about the college, and other success related topics. A key component of the course will be the initial development of a pre-professional portfolio.

#### Prerequisites/Co-requisites

None

## Course Outcomes for EDUC 1010

### **Expected Student Outcomes: Teacher Emphasis**

At the end of this course, it is expected that the student will:

1. Have been provided an extended, or continued orientation.
2. Have been introduced to higher education as a discipline, per/se.
3. Demonstrate an improved attitude toward faculty and the teaching/learning process.
4. Understand and use the institution's support services.
5. Have been introduced to career counseling and have been provided assistance in making decisions about majors.
6. Be more likely to get involved in the life of the school.
7. Have been exposed to the diversity of human existence and cultural life.

### **Expected Student Outcomes: Student Emphasis**

At the end of this course the student will be able to:

1. Set goals for college and life.
2. Learn to manage time, as a foundation of academic success.
3. Assess and accommodate his/her own individual learning styles.
4. Acquire listening skills through practice.
5. Take lecture notes and read textbooks for greater understanding.
6. Acquire improved strategies for preparation for tests and exams.
7. Get the most out of campus relationships.
8. Understand library organization and usage.
9. Learn how to prepare for writing.
10. Understand the liberal arts and the process of critical thinking.
11. Learn to utilize the academic advisor, choose a major, and plan a career.
12. Understand the diversity of the college campus as it relates to women, minorities, and age.
13. Learn to deal with assertiveness, relationships, and campus involvement.
14. Begin the initial development of a pre-professional portfolio.

### **General Education Course Designation**

None (1 semester credit hour)

Purpose

1. To assist students in building academic skills.
2. To assist students in becoming acquainted with college resources and expectations.
3. To assist students in developing the structure and discipline needed in order to meet academic and social expectations.
4. To assist students in developing an attachment to the institution, the faculty, the staff, and other students.

## Instructional and Evaluation Methods

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Earned Points</u>
Comprehensive Exam	100	
Self Analysis	100	
Autobiographical Sketch	100	
Individualized Plan	100	
Thinking Back/Thinking Ahead	100	
Oral Presentation	100	
Pre-Professional Portfolio	100	
Attendance	100	
Total	800	

- August 30* Start Portfolio  
 Learning Styles Inventory  
 Keirsey Temperament Sorter  
 Entering Student Questionnaire  
 Start Self Analysis  
 Start Autobiographical Sketch
- September 1* Library Tour
- September 6* Holiday – No Class
- September 8* Chapter 1 Becoming Self Aware  
 Chapter 2 Thinking Critically and Solving Problems  
 Chapter 3 Utilizing Resources and Exploring Campus Life
- September 13* Scavenger Hunt  
 Thinking Back-Thinking Ahead, Chapters 1, 2, & 3 due
- September 15* Chapter 4 Planning and Pursuing a Satisfying Career  
 Chapter 5 Setting and Achieving Reasonable Goals  
 Chapter 6 Taking In and Remembering Information
- September 20* 2 year plan  
 Resume  
 Thinking Back – Thinking Ahead, Chapters 4, 5, & 6 due
- September 22* Chapter 7 Communicating Effectively  
 Chapter 8 Refining and Enhancing Reading and Study Skills





Chapter 2 pages 41-42	September 13
Chapter 3 pages 66-68	September 13
Chapter 4 pages 86-92	September 20
Chapter 5 pages 118-121	September 20
Chapter 6 pages 144-146	September 20
Chapter 7 pages 167-170	September 27
Chapter 8 pages 190-192	September 27
Chapter 9 pages 219-220	September 27
Chapter 10 pages 237-239	September 27

The ten points can be collected on the due dates ONLY.

- Each student will schedule an academic advising session in the appropriate department major (undecided should schedule with the Office of Counseling and Testing). The goal of this session is to clarify course selection and facilitate future registration.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Advisors, please initial in the space to the left.**

- Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. (See *The Walters State Catalog and Student Handbook*.)

Grading Scale

728-800	A
648-727	B
568-647	C
488-567	D
487 and below	F

Class Attendance and Make-up Policy

- Class attendance is mandatory. Attendance will be a grade added in (or not) with your other grades.

Number of Absences MW	Number of Points
0	100
2	80
3 or more	0

- Students who miss more than 20 percent of the scheduled class meetings will fail the course. Based on 13 one hour sessions of instruction, the maximum number of absences is 3. The alternative to potentially failing the course because of absences is to withdraw immediately.
- Because regular class attendance is a student obligation, it is the student's responsibility to see the instructor when assignments and class activities are missed and to be prepared for

each class meeting. Graded activities must be completed by the next scheduled class meeting. (Thinking Back – Thinking Ahead not included.)

4. Students should attend the first day of class or contact the instructor prior to the first meeting. The college requires the instructor to keep accurate records and to report when students are not attending class.
5. Section 10639 the drop deadline is \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Miscellaneous Ground Rules**

Regular class attendance is a student's obligation. (See *The Walters State Catalog/ Student Handbook*.) If for some reason a student misses a class, it is his or her responsibility to see the instructor regarding missed assignments and/or activities and to be prepared for the next class. Excessive absences may substantially lower the semester grade.

The college requires the instructor to keep accurate records and to report when students are not attending class. Students should attend the first day of class or contact the instructor prior to the first class. Failure to do so may result in the student's being dropped from the class. Class attendance during the final examination period is compulsory.

Students who have not paid fees on time and/or not correctly registered for this class and whose names do not appear on official class rolls generated by the Admissions and Records office will not be allowed to remain in class or receive credit for this course.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. The penalty for cheating shall be the receiving of a "O" (zero) on the examination or assignment.

Students with disabilities must register with the Department of Services for Individuals with Disabilities in CCEN 210 B (phone xxx-xxxx) if they need any special facilities, services, or consideration.

Students in need of tutoring assistance are encouraged to contact the Office of Tutoring, Located in the College Center (CCEN 221A). The phone number is (XXX) xxx-xxxx.

Students receiving any type of financial aid or scholarship should contact the Financial Aid Office before making any changes to their schedule. Schedule changes without prior approval may result in loss of award for the current term and future terms.

Cellular phone use during classroom instruction is prohibited. Cellular phones must be turned to the non-audible mode until after class, at which time calls can be received or checked. (See *The Walters State Catalog/Student Handbook*.)

All students attending Walters State Community College, regardless of the time and location of the class, must abide by the rules and regulations outlined in the current Walters State Catalog/Student Handbook and the current Walters State Timetable of Classes. A copy of the Catalog/Handbook and the Timetable of Classes may be obtained from the admissions office on the main campus or at any of our off-campus sites. You may also access the Catalog/Handbook on-line at the following web address:  
<http://www.ws.edu/catalog>

THE LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASS IS \_\_\_\_\_.

