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Reasons that post-secondary culinary students enrolled in for-profit educational institutions drop out and methods that can be used to increase retention rates

Craig Frigaard
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Reasons that Post-secondary Culinary Students
Enrolled in For-profit Educational Institutions
Drop Out and Methods That Can Be Used to Increase Retention Rates

by

Craig Frigaard

Bachelor of Arts in Education
Arizona State University
1974

Bachelor of Science in Hotel Administration
University of Nevada Las Vegas
1985

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Hospitality Administration

**William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration
Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 10, 2008**

ABSTRACT

Reasons that Post-secondary Culinary Students
Enrolled in For-profit Educational Institutions
Drop Out and Methods That Can Be Used to Increase Retention Rates

by

Craig Frigaard

Dr, Jean Hertzman Ph.D. CCE, Committee Chair
Assistant Professor of Food & Beverage Management
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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PART ONE

Introduction

Most people appreciate and understand the value of education. They are aware that education can significantly increase the potential earnings a person can make over their lifetime, improve the security and stability in their chosen profession, improve their competency, and make it easier to be successful at their job. Education can also increase the amount of respect a person may receive from their peers and all of these things can improve the overall quality of their life. Education can be extremely important to an individual's success.

In the past, formal education has often been considered as somewhat unnecessary by hospitality industry employees and managers because much of the training has been passed down through hands-on methods of learning. Developing skills in the back of the house (kitchen areas) has usually been characteristic of a trade school style of education and the skill needed to effectively deal with the public is something that is not thought of as easily learned from textbooks or in a classroom setting. Some of the specific skills needed to produce great culinary creations or to satisfy the public can only be mastered by performing them repeatedly.

For this reason, the work environments that should place a high value on having more educated students have actually been slow to embrace the benefits of culinary education. Formal educational institutions that train culinary personnel have only begun to emerge in large numbers over the past 20 to 25 years. Now there are at least 467 culinary programs at private schools or community colleges offering two-year associate's degrees and large universities offering four-year baccalaureate programs (Berta, 2005). As more students graduate from these schools, their impact on the industry has become significant. Significant enough that now, many culinary

employers at large hospitality properties and food service operations require at least an Associate's degree in Culinary Arts for employment consideration. People in the industry who aspire to higher management positions are expected to have at least a bachelor degree in some culinary, hospitality, or business field to be seriously considered for those positions.

The cost of obtaining culinary degrees can be significant. It is not unusual for a student pursuing an associate's degree in culinary arts at a private post-secondary educational institution to spend over \$50,000 during the two years it takes to earn this degree and a bachelor's degree in culinary management can run in excess of \$80,000. The financial costs are only one of many demands that a new culinary student may face and it can be extremely challenging for students to complete a culinary education program.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper will be to: (a) determine the primary reasons why culinary students drop out of for-profit post secondary culinary educational programs, (b) identify what current steps are being taken at for-profit post secondary culinary institutions to address those reasons, and (c) to make recommendations as to what further courses of action can be taken or what additional support systems can be established or modified to reduce future dropout rates and achieve better graduation levels with culinary students at for-profit schools. One specific objective of this paper will be to identify the reasons why students have dropped out of the designated pilot private for-profit educational institution and determine whether or not further investigation will be necessary to provide more a more accurate assessment of the reasons. Another objective of this paper will be to make recommendations, based on the information that

is gathered and discussed within the confines of this paper, as to how the pilot organization could specifically improve their retention rate as it related to culinary education.

Problem Statement

Culinary education is a relatively new and extremely fast growing segment of the post-secondary educational system in the United States. Although there are differences in educational philosophies, reputations, and objectives between state-funded or public post secondary culinary education schools and for-profit post secondary culinary schools, the nature of their curriculums and the focus of their overall programs have many similarities.

The most obvious differences between the two are typically in the admission requirements and the tuition costs associated with participating in each of these types of programs. State-funded or public culinary programs are generally considered to have more stringent academic admission requirements but are considered less expensive to attend. The for-profit post secondary culinary education programs are generally considered less academically demanding to gain admission to, but more expensive to attend (Bailey, Badwell & Gumport, n.d.).

Retention rates within culinary education programs are not well documented. Based on a telephone survey conducted in 2005 of 51 culinary schools across the country, less than half of the programs calculated their retention rate. For those that did, the mean retention rate was 81 %, with a range of 30% to 98% (Berta, 2005).

Justification

In business, the financial health of any organization is dependent on how well and how efficiently that organization can meet the specific need that the business was created to fill and

how well the organization can respond to the ever changing climate in which they operate. The field of education is not much different. The basic purpose of education is to increase knowledge and teach concepts that allow for improved decision making and more logical, informed thought processes. One of the assumptions is that the person gaining this knowledge uses it in a manner that increases their chances for success in any future endeavors they choose to engage in. This has the possibility of improving their earning potential, making them more proficient at their job, and elevating their personal standard of living. Whenever students personally invest in themselves by enrolling in an education program, they do so with the belief that these principles will hold true for them also. Culinary education should not be an exception.

Many for-profit culinary education organizations invest large sums of money in an attempt to meet these educational needs. They create educational programs with the belief that the students who enroll in their schools are sincere in their desire to complete their studies and graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to make a better life. They also believe that by adequately meeting this need, they will receive the necessary income from the tuition charged to provide a reasonable return on the investment they make in the facilities, faculty, and other necessary components and assets that are required to fulfill the need they are trying to satisfy.

Every time a student cuts their educational program short, the student not only receives a diminished return on the personal investment in them self, but the for-profit institution loses the potential to recover the investment they made to provide that student the opportunity to get that knowledge. This creates a lose-lose situation for both the student and the educational organization. By more accurately identifying the reasons students drop out of their culinary education program prematurely, these educational institutions can better assess whether or not

they are adequately meeting the need they exist to satisfy. If the reasons students are dropping out are beyond the control of the institution, there is little they can do to prevent it, and they must factor that in as a cost of doing business. If however, they are not meeting the needs of students in the areas that they are in a position to control, they can evaluate what those reasons are, how much it will cost to remedy them and then, make decisions as to whether or not it makes sense from an educational and business perspective, to address their shortcomings either totally or in part.

Constraints

There are several constraints that have been placed on the breadth and depth of the study. The first constraint was that the research was performed at one pilot school. The raw data obtained may not be reflective of a larger sample of schools and thus, the results and recommendations may not be similar to conclusions that would be drawn with more information.

A second constraint was that no specific set of consistent survey questions was presented to each student who gave reasons for dropping out. Had a survey been available and utilized, it could produce more accurate information.

A third constraint was that all self reported information was assumed to be accurate. Although no audit or verification process was performed to determine the accuracy of the self-reported information results, an assumption was made that all input was done accurately.

A fourth constraint was the time limit allowed to complete the study. Because this study has a specific deadline, time does not permit the researcher to create a more inquisitive survey that could be sent out to former students who have dropped out, get the results back, analyze the

results and provide a more accurate assessment of the reasons for those students dropping out of the program.

A fifth constraint was the lack of funds to advance the research beyond the limited scope of this topic.

Glossary

During the course of this study, several terms specific to culinary education will be used. The following represent a glossary of those commonly used terms.

At-risk students are students who have one or more family background or other factors that have been found to predict a high rate of school failure at some time in the future. This “failure” generally refers to dropping out of high school before graduating but also can mean being retained within a grade from one year to the next. The risk factors include having a mother whose education is less than high school, living in a single-parent family, receiving welfare assistance, and living in a household where the primary language spoken is other than English (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

For-profit institution: A postsecondary institution that is operated as a profit-making enterprise. This includes career colleges and proprietary schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Private institution: A postsecondary institution that is controlled by an independent governing board and incorporated under Section 503(c) of the Internal Revenue Code. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Public institution: A postsecondary education institution supported primarily by public funds and operated by publicly elected or appointed officials who control the program and activities (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

PART TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The topic of student retention in post secondary education has been researched, discussed and debated for many years. The reasons why students do not complete their original educational intentions are varied and sometimes complicated. Several researchers, many of whom will be cited in this review, have defined many of the obvious and common reasons for students dropping out of school before they have completed their studies and has even identified some of the reasons why students transfer into different fields. Although there may be few overall differences in the reasons students have for dropping out, what can change from one generation to another, is which reasons are the most prevalent in that particular time period.

Student dropout rate patterns are very complex in nature (Eric Development Team, 1984) and may vary according to what stage of the educational program the student is in. Because of the complexity of the factors that affect dropout patterns, many post secondary institutions do not consistently or accurately track the reasons students drop out. Keeping detailed records of those reasons is a necessary step for reducing dropout rates, and reducing dropout rates is a vital part of keeping an educational institution viable. The available funding for state-supervised and private educational institutions and profitability level of the for-profit educational facilities depends heavily on high enrollment numbers. (F. Virella, personal communication, November 15, 2007)

If one were to consider the operation of an educational facility from a business perspective, students are the customers, and like other businesses, if too many customers [students] are lost for preventable reasons, the economic viability of the establishment, or in this case the

educational institution, is reduced. Vincent Tinto (1987), a nationally recognized retention scholar, expressed a similar sentiment with respect to student retention when he observed that even though more institutions are using sophisticated marketing techniques to recruit students, the value of doing this has diminished. Institutions have come to realize that retaining students until they complete their degree is the only reasonable option left to ensure their survival.

Little research has been done in the area of culinary education at for-profit post-secondary schools, especially on topics such as the reasons students drop out. In order to better identify the reasons why students may drop out prematurely at for-profit post secondary education institutions, it may be necessary to first review the reasons that students have dropped out of other types of post secondary schools.

Why Student Retention is Important

The student dropout problem is very real and increasingly important to almost every institution of higher education. According to the Educational Resources Informational Center, “The dwindling cohort of traditionally-aged college students has triggered a keen competition among colleges for enrollments; there is no longer a steady stream of entering students to take the place of those who drop out, and dropouts simply represent lost students and lost revenue” (Eric Development Team, 1984, p.2). As the number of educational facilities continues to increase, the importance of retaining students becomes an even more crucial issue.

Post-secondary Enrollment Demographics and Habits

In order to understand the student retention problem, it is helpful to first look at the demographics of students who enroll in the different types of post secondary education programs. Based on research performed from 1996- 2001, Tinto determined that of the student

population that enrolled in college for the first time, 55% were female, 70% were 19 years of age or younger, 29% were Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander or American Indian/ Alaska native, 42% were first generation college students whose parents did not have more than a high school diploma and 26% had dependent family incomes of less \$25,000. In viewing the statistical evidence concerning school selection type, 46% enrolled in public two-year colleges, 26% enrolled in four-year public colleges or universities, 15% enrolled in private four-year institutions and 10% enrolled in for-profit institutions (Tinto, 2004).

According to Policy Analysis for California Education, the first year and even the first semester in college are pivotal points in students' academic careers (Driscoll, 2007). Many of the opinions, impressions, attitudes and study habits that students develop are formed during this initially crucial time in their educational career. If students can be encouraged and guided to develop good study habits and practice time management skills, their chances of success will be higher than if they do not receive this assistance.

“Nearly all students continue to want some form of postsecondary education, but there are some large changes in the type of education sought. More than 95 percent of students report, both at the end of 12th grade and 18 months later, that they will need some postsecondary education to prepare for the job they expect to obtain” (Haimson & Deke, 2003, p. xii).

Factors That Cause Students to Drop Out of Post-secondary Education

While there are several factors for why students drop out of school, it is also important to remember that not all students who enroll in college intend to get a degree. Some people take college classes to upgrade their job skills, qualify for a promotion or get knowledge to change jobs (Tinto, 2004). It should also be pointed out that students who are suspended or terminated

from school for failing to meet academic, behavioral or attendance related issues will also, for the purpose of this paper, be considered drops.

Age

One factor for students dropping out of post secondary education can be attributed to the age of the student when they enroll. Older students comprise a large proportion of total undergraduates in U.S. colleges and universities, especially at community colleges. In fall 2002, adults between age 25 and 64 represented 35% of full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollments at 2-year public colleges, compared with only 15% of FTE undergraduate enrollments at 4-year public institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Although adults are returning to college in increasing numbers, research has consistently shown that they are less likely to complete a degree or certificate than younger students (Choy, 2002; Choy & Premo, 1995). The reasons for this have often been because older students are more likely to be working, married, and caring for children while enrolled (Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey & Jenkins, 2007).

Academic Preparedness

A second factor for students dropping out may be attributed to not being academically prepared. The better prepared a student is for the rigors of post secondary education, the greater the likelihood of that a student remaining in school. How well prepared a student is for the academic challenges of college can be directly attributed to the academic intensity of their high school curriculum. The difficulty level of the high school classes completed can make a significant difference in how well prepared students are for post secondary education (Adelman, 2006).

Students who had completed classes in English, mathematics, (especially courses in either calculus, pre-calculus or trigonometry) core science laboratory courses such as biology, chemistry and physics, social studies and history classes, one or two courses in foreign languages, and a computer science course have a greater propensity to complete their post secondary degrees (Adelman,2006).

Students who have taken more difficult classes are accustomed to meeting higher standards. The students who have the experience of meeting higher expectations may be less affected by grading differences that many students, who are not accustomed to meeting those higher standards may experience when entering post secondary institutions. Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini (1991) published studies in the early 1990s addressing several measures that affected student retention. One of the measures was the quality of the school as a factor of student retention. They believed that there was a strong correlation between the difficulty a student faces getting into selective post secondary schools and the student's commitment to staying there and completing a degree.

Academic Performance

According to Adelman (2006), a student's grade point averages affect the decision to drop out more than any other single variable. A student's academic performance, which is reflected by their grades, is a strong indication of the quality of effort being made by the student. Students earning grades that place them in the top 40 % of first-year GPAs for their class can be considered a strong and positive factor for students to achieve the academic momentum needed to insure successful completion of their program (Adelman, 2006).

Faculty

Another factor for students not completing their education can be found with the instructors that teach them. In his article *Effects of Part-Time Faculty Employment on Community College Graduation Rates*, Jacoby (2006) discusses how the employment of part-time faculty can reduce instructional quality through the lack of curricular cohesion, and can also contribute to weak advising. He feels this is partially because many part time faculty members do not have higher education degrees and subsequently, do not have the same instructional experience or practices as those who do (Jacoby, 2006). A study done on effects of faculty measures on student retention by Ronald Ehrenberg and Liang Zhang (2004) concluded that for every 10% increase in the percentage of faculty employed part-time at four-year institutions, graduation rates decrease by 2.65%.

The relationship that students have with faculty can also be tied to student retention. For example, the amount of contact a student has with faculty, the student's evaluations of the faculty, and the amount of his or her satisfaction with these interactions are some of the most common measures used to assess the influences of faculty on the attrition of students (Bank, Slavings & Biddle, 1990). Having a low faculty to student ratio can contribute to making these relationships stronger, because it allows the faculty to devote more time to a more personalized style of education. Alexander Astin, in his book, *What Matters in College?: Four Critical Years*, touches on another aspect of the faculty student relationship. He concludes that students attending colleges where the faculty is heavily research-oriented can experience increased dissatisfaction and this can negatively impact most measures of cognitive and affective

development. Conversely students who attend colleges that are strongly oriented toward student development show the opposite effects (Astin, 1993).

Social Influences

The effects of social influences on dropout rates, especially in the first semester, identify a fifth factor affecting student persistence. Research has found that three types of people may affect students' decisions to leave school early: peers, faculty, and parents (Bank et al.1990). Most studies of attrition that look at peer influences focus on measures of influence such as the number of friends a student has on campus, the time the student spends with other students, and the student's satisfaction with his or her social life at college (Bank et al. 1990). Parental influences also effect students' persistence and are evaluated by measuring the status characteristics of the parents. The student's father's education, the student's mother's education, and the student's father's occupation each have significant direct and positive effects on students' persistence at college over a four year period (Bank et al. 1990).

Finances

Financial viability is many times a major consideration for why students end up dropping out of post-secondary education. Not only is the cost of education continually rising, but the price of education (many for-profit post-secondary institutions charge in excess of \$50,000 for a 2 year degree) causes a continual cost/benefit analysis to play out in the student's mind as they go through their educational experience. Students who attend private colleges are more likely to consider high aid an important factor in the choice of schools, are less sensitive to tuition and living costs and are more influenced by grant aid (Paulsen & St. John, 1997). Individual

decisions with regard to the perceived costs and benefits of their education will continually vary as the elements affecting those decisions change.

Given the fact that educational costs and benefits are both direct and indirect in nature, and include social as well as economic factors, individuals will ultimately make their decisions in a way that maximizes the benefit to cost ratio over a given period of time. With respect to staying in school, this perspective puts forth that a person will tend to drop out of school whenever they perceive that an alternative form of investment of time, energies, and resources will yield greater benefits, relative to costs, over time than staying in school (Tinto, 1975).

One of the predominant cost/ benefit factors continues to be the overall cost of education as related to the potential future earnings that can be derived from the education received.

Culinary school graduates can expect to make from just under \$11,000 to \$32,000 annually and in some cases up to \$50,000 a year, according to the 2005 National Survey of American Culinary Programs, which was published in Chef Educator Today (Berta, 2005).

An additional aspect of the financial discussion would be the fact that any financial demands that require a student to work while going to school and ultimately creates a situation where the student must choose between working or going to school may have some additional effect on the cost benefit analysis decision.

Facilities

Satisfaction with the educational facilities can also influence a student's decision to remain in school. Students who enroll in a program and at a later date, discover that the facilities are not large enough, properly equipped or reasonably available may feel they are not receiving the education level that meets their expectations and can decide to drop out and go elsewhere.

Motivation Level

When students begin their postsecondary educational experience, the number of classes that a student takes and the pace at which a student works towards attaining his/her degree can also have a significant effect on the whether or not a student will be successful completing the program. Students who enter postsecondary education immediately following high school graduation seem to have a greater chance to continue their education in an uninterrupted manner, whereas the longer students wait, the less likely they will finish their degree. Additionally, students who complete less than 20 credits by the end of the first calendar year of enrollment can be a serious concern with respect to degree completion. Students who attend and earn more than four credits during a summer term will have a greater likelihood of degree completion (Adelman, 2006).

Uncontrollable Aspects

When studying the topic of student retention, the uncontrollable factors that may cause a student to drop out must not overlooked. Some students do not adjust well to being away from home for the first time. Their failure to make friends, fit in or control their sense of homesickness may cause a student to rethink the value of their educational experience. Students may also be forced to deal with unforeseeable family problems or severe illness that can require the student to change their plans. Students who are in the military may get called up for active duty or families may have to relocate to another area for economic or promotional reasons. Some drop outs occur because students pick the wrong educational institution to attend, or may change their career goals to areas that may not be addressed at that institution (Go College.com, 2007).

Other Controllable Factors

There are controllable actions that can also result in the unintended result of contributing to students dropping out. Some may occur because the student may have pushed themselves too hard for too long and they experience educational burnout. Others may have to leave school because of an unwanted pregnancy. There are also factors that can be described as indicators of high risk students or students that have a higher propensity for dropping out. Some of these factors are; commuting students are more likely to drop out than those who live in campus dormitories, students who are dependent on child care in order to attend classes have a tendency to develop attendance problems, students who do not have a strong certainty of their career choice after they have enrolled or do not have realistic expectations for where they will be when they graduate (D.McGuirk, personal communication, January 8, 2008).

Literary Review Summary

As demonstrated by the above research, the factors that can influence student decisions to drop out of school are varied and complex. Often it is not necessarily one specific major reason that causes the decision, but a combination of smaller or less significant reasons. Regardless of why students drop out, it is a problem that most educational institutions will need to become more resourceful at solving.

When confronted with the fact that the number of students enrolling in post secondary education is falling and the number of educational institutions is increasing; the issue of student retention becomes a much more important issue than it has been at any other time in educational history. Becoming familiar with and understanding the predominant factors that influence student decisions to drop out; and developing the necessary strategies to minimize or partially

eliminate these factors at any institution will contribute significantly to student success and the financial health of the educational program they are enrolled in.

Although the specific status that each student has with respect to the predominant factors of age, academic preparedness, financial resources, and individual motivation can contribute to a higher propensity to drop out; there ultimately must be a mutual decision between the educational institution and the student, to participate in a partnership to make sure the student has every opportunity to accomplish their educational goals. By helping students do this, the educational institution will also accomplish their own organizational goals.

PART THREE

Introduction

After investigating the most prevalent reasons why students drop out, the questions to ask at this point would be; how do these reasons compare with the reasons given by the culinary students at our pilot school, and; what is being done to eliminate or minimize those reasons from reoccurring? Part three of this paper identifies the reasons for drop outs at the pilot school and assesses some of those reasons while looking at the demographics of the student body. This section will also identify what the school is doing to reduce or prevent these reasons from re-occurring, draw conclusions based on the results, and make recommendations for what the school can do to be more effective and accomplish the desired results they expect to achieve with respect to persistence.

Limitations

In order to accurately interpret the results, the reader must understand the limitations that exist for the researcher and the information that will be presented. By identifying the limitations, the validity of the recommendations can be better established. Although the exact impact of each cannot be established, there are several limitations that had varying degrees of influence on the results of this study.

One of the limitations of this study was the relatively short history of the existence for the pilot school. The pilot school that is the focus of this study has been in its current location for approximately nine years and the school's culinary education program has been in existence for approximately six years. The total number of culinary students enrolled at any given time has fluctuated since its inception number of 18 students to a high of approximately 200 students and

currently has an enrollment of approximately 170 students. Thus, the small sample population available to study student responses explaining their reasons for exiting the program prior to graduation may have an effect on the accuracy of the study.

Another limitation is the accuracy of the reasons that were provided. Many times, students may not fully disclose the true reasons why they are leaving school. At other times, although the reasons appear to be obvious, they may actually be symptoms of deeper reasons that were not accurately identified. It is also possible that some of the normal organizational problems that plague a start up school may have also contributed to the dropout rate without a clear identification of what those factors were and how much influence they had on the student's ultimate decision.

A third limitation is the limited number of people that were interviewed. Although the people that were interviewed at the pilot institution may accurately represent the views of many their respective groups, it would be much more informative to interview a larger cross section of students at various stages of their education and also interview a number of Deans of Academic Affairs and the Deans of Student Affairs at different campuses to gain a better perspective of the reasons students drop out early.

A fourth limitation is that the answers given by the students and the Dean of Academic Affairs may not be entirely accurate because they are personal opinions that may represent assumptions rather than concrete factual evidence. The students and the Dean of Academic Affairs may not be fully aware of all of the circumstances that contributed to the observations they made.

A similar situation occurs with the fifth limitation. None of the students who dropped out were interviewed by the researcher or asked a consistent set of exit interview questions that would have provided a more accurate or exact cause of their premature departure.

Sample

The target population for this study was all former culinary students at the pilot school who dropped the program prior to graduating. The requirements for qualifying former students was that they originally enrolled in the associate degree program in either culinary arts or baking and pastry or the bachelor's degree program in culinary management at the pilot school before the fall quarter of 2005. The student had to attend class for at least three weeks of their first quarter of study. Information about the reasons why former students dropped out was obtained from student dropout reports generated internally. The population size of former students who responded with their reasons for dropping out is 215 students for all three programs.

Demographic Information

In order to better identify the demographic makeup of the pilot school, a cursory examination was conducted. The pilot school culinary student demographic breakdown rendered the following statistics: 56% of the students are female, 48% are Caucasian, 29% are Hispanic, 13% are Black and 10% are Asian.

The age ranges for culinary students were not available, nor were the educational levels of the student's parents or their annual salary ranges. The most recent information available about age ranges for the entire pilot school full time student population revealed that 83% of the total student body is full time students and 17% of the student body is part time students. Of the full time students who identified their age, 18% were under the age of 19, while 65% are under

the age of 25 and over 83% are under the age of 30. Only 16% of the full time student population was over 30. In comparison, when viewing the make-up of the part time student population, 12% are under the age of 19, over 47% are under the age of 25, and over 71% are under the age of 30. Over 29% of the part time student population is over 30. Based on the personal observations of the researcher, there appears to be a significant similarity between the age trends of the general student population and the student population of the culinary department.

The prior education levels of currently enrolled culinary students reflect that 53% came directly to the pilot school from high school while 47% attended another post secondary educational institution prior to enrolling in the pilot program. Over 62% of the culinary students currently enrolled in the pilot program are Nevada residents, whereas almost 38% have out of state residency status (The Art Institute IPEDS Enrollment Report by Age, 2007).

Admission Requirements

Admission to the pilot school is not academically challenging. Before a student can begin studies at the pilot school, he or she must have received a diploma from a regionally accredited high school, demonstrated satisfactory completion of state school equivalency requirements, or obtained a GED. The admissions committee gives preference to students with a 3.0 (B) average or above. Applying students must also supply an official report of ASSET test scores. SAT, ACT, or COMPASS test scores can be used in place of the ASSET test.

International students seeking to enroll at the pilot school in non-immigrant status must also submit original or official copies of all educational transcripts (high school and, if applicable, university level academic records) and diplomas. The student must also provide proof of English language proficiency (The Art Institute Catalog, 2006-2007).

Measures

The interview and survey portion of this project will assume a qualitative research approach. Results will be assessed according to reasons provided by each student that dropped out or by the administrator that oversaw the drop process. Information solicited from the management personnel varied from person to person depending on their position and the amount of involvement and decision making ability they have monitoring and preventing student dropout rates. Interviews with the Dean of Academic Affairs and two undergraduate students were conducted. The two undergraduate students were selected based on the length of time they have attended the school. One student graduated at the end of the fall quarter 2007, and one student was finishing her fifth of out seven quarters of studies. Each student was asked the same set of questions (See Appendix A & B).

Reasons Why Students at the Pilot School Drop Out

Although the reasons why students drop out of state funded schools were identified; the number or percentage of students who fell into each category was not. As mentioned by the Eric Development Team (2004), most institutions do not keep good records regarding their student retention. As student retention becomes a more important issue with many schools, many in education expect this to change. Fortunately, the pilot school has kept records, not only of the reasons why students dropped out, but also have recorded the number of students who have fallen into each reason category. The following table and chart summarize the information gathered concerning the reasons culinary students at the pilot school prematurely left the program during the time period from January 2005 to December 2007:

Table 1 Reasons for Dropping Out

Reasons	%
Attendance Termination	28.37
Academic Termination	14.88
Unknown	13.49
Inadequate Funds	9.30
Illness	7.44
Transfers	5.12
Family Concerns	4.19
All Other Reasons	17.21
Total	100.00

Note. Summary of Culinary Student Drop Reports from January of 2005 to December of 2007.

As illustrated by the above statistics, the primary reason for students dropping or being terminated from the program was due to attendance terminations. The pilot school has a policy that if the student misses a total of 14 consecutive days during any one quarter, they are completely dropped from the program (The Art Institute Catalog, 2006-2007). Each department has their own attendance policy. The policy for the culinary department generally states that if the student misses a specifically stated number of hours per class (the exact amount is dependent on the number of credits the class is, how many days per week the class meets and whether the class is a lab or a lecture class) during an 11 week quarter, the student may be dropped from the class with all of the consequences or penalties that may result. These consequences could be a

reduced class load for that quarter which could have financial aid ramifications, a possible reduction in their quarterly or overall GPA and the financial penalty of having to pay to take the class again for credit (The Art Institute Culinary Department Attendance Policy, 2007).

The second most significant reason for students dropping out of the culinary program at the pilot school is academic termination. Academic termination is instituted whenever either of two standards is not met. The first measure is based on the student's cumulative grade point average (CGPA). The CGPA is calculated on a 4.0 grading point system where an A is 4 points, a B is 3 points, a C is 2 points and a D is 1 point. One takes the total number of points earned for each class and dividing it by the total possible points that could be earned for the same number of classes to establish a cumulative grade point average.

The second measure is the incremental completion rate (IRC). This is a measurement of the number of credits taken in proportion to the number of credits dropped while taking the program. Students are only allowed to drop a specified percentage of credits needed to graduate from the program. The IRC can also indicate the graduation pace needed for the student to complete the program within the time limits provided. If a student's cumulative grade point average (CGPA) falls below 1.0 at the end of the first quarter or their IRC is below 33.33% or if their CGPA falls below 1.0 after the end of the second quarter or their IRC falls below 33.33%. If a student has a CGPA of 1.5 or an IRC of 50% the student could be placed on academic probation. A minimum CGPA of 2.0 must be achieved by the end of the fourth quarter with an IRC of 66.67% and must be maintained for each subsequent quarter. All students enrolled in any associate's or bachelor's degree program must earn a CGPA of 2.0 in order to graduate (Art Institute Catalog, 2006-2007).

The third most dominant reason for students leaving is for unknown reasons. Many times a student may leave school without informing anyone of the reasons why. They could be for one of the other identified reasons, but since no school official is able to speak with the student and determine the specific reason, the unknown category is marked by the administrative person (in most cases either the Academic Director of the department or the Dean of Academic Affairs) who actually administers the termination. (F. Virella, personal communication, November 25, 2007)

Financial reasons comprise the fourth most common reason students drop out. No distinction is made between those students who have trouble because they do not qualify for loans, those who have difficulty maintaining loans requirements because of their inability to carry certain academic credit minimums per quarter, maintain minimal GPA standards per quarter, or have to work and thus may have work/school scheduling conflicts.

Illness, transfers and family concerns each make up a statistically smaller portion of reasons why a student drops out, with no distinction made between whether the illness reason is due to the student's own illness or a family member's illness.

The all other reasons category actually incorporates several different categories that include relocation (2.33%), reporting for active duty in the armed forces (1.86%), not ready for school (1.86%), traveling (1.86%), school did not meet expectations (1.40%), career change (1.40%), housing problems (.93%), conduct termination (.93%), transportation problems (.93%) and death (.47%). Relocation was not defined as the student's specific relocation or a family relocation that the student felt compelled to join. The school did not meet expectations category is somewhat vague. No distinction can be made between whether the student felt the facilities

were inadequate, the faculty was unqualified or the curriculum did not meet their expectations. It would be useful to more specifically identify those characteristics within that reason (Summary of Culinary Student Drop Reports from January of 2005 to December of 2007).

Interview Information

After reviewing the reasons stated on the drop reports for why students drop out, interviews were conducted with two students and the Dean of Academic Affairs. The first student interviewed was a student who was in her final quarter of school and graduated in December of 2007. She started her post secondary education directly out of high school although she went to a large four year university near her out of state home. After a short period of time, she transferred to the pilot school specifically for the culinary program. Based on the interview, it was determined that she was a full time student, in the 18 – 21 year old age category and had a very high GPA in high school. Neither of her parents had post secondary degrees, but her family was very supportive of her getting a degree. She came from an upper middle class family and had a very strong, clear idea about what she wanted to do. Her parents were paying for her education so although finances were not an issue with her, she was under pressure from her family to finish her studies because she did not want to waste her parents funds.

This student knew 15 -20 students who had dropped out during her time at the pilot school. The students who dropped out in the first quarter of their studies seemed to drop out, in her opinion, because they were under pressure from their families, to go to school but didn't really know what they wanted to do. They did not seem to be committed to the program. This was reflected by low grades and inconsistent attendance. Those who dropped out in later quarters seemed to do so because work interfered with their school schedule, or they just didn't like Las

Vegas and decided to leave. In her opinion, the bad financial choices these students made could have contributed to their need to find jobs. The students that dropped out due to outside commitments or illness in her opinion were few (R. Gullick, personal communication, November 13, 2007).

The second student interviewed was also from an upper middle class family and was born and raised in Nevada. She also had very supportive family and a clear idea that the culinary industry was the career path she wanted to pursue. As with student #1, she was aware of other students who had dropped out and also felt that the primary reasons for the drop outs was a lack of commitment to the culinary field. She held the same opinion as student #1 in that many of the students who did drop out were not really sure of what they were getting into although she believed that some had a different expectation than what they actually experienced. She was aware of some students that had issues with faculty members, but she was not specifically aware of what the issues were. Although she was not aware of any students who actually dropped out because of faculty members, she had heard other students complain that the promises made from admission representatives were not what they actually experienced when they got to school. The student did not elaborate on this issue, other than to say that the reason she came to the pilot school was because the admissions representatives came to her high school. Student #2, like student #1, never considered dropping out personally (N. Walker, personal communication, November 14, 2007).

The interview with the Dean of Academic Affairs identified many of the internal processes that the pilot school has in place to monitor dropout rates regardless of reason. The Dean also explained the entire process for report generation, the methods for interpreting the

various persistence reports generated, the processes in place to identify high risk students in danger of dropping out or being terminated from the program and the steps that were normally taken to prevent those students from dropping out. The Dean confirmed that persistence rates for the culinary department were much higher than rates for other disciplines within the pilot school. However, at the time of the interview, the persistence rate for the culinary department was starting to improve. He also confirmed that the higher persistence rates in the culinary departments were a common characteristic at all the culinary schools within the corporation. The Dean emphasized that the pilot school focuses primarily on the aspects of persistence that are controllable from their position. He also highlighted that the faculty members of the school were the first line of detection and prevention when it came to having an impact on persistence rates. In his opinion, a student sensitive faculty member is the one who knows the student the best, works with them the closest and can alert their Academic Directors, the Dean of Student Affairs and the Dean of Academic Affairs quickly to address a problem while it is still in the easily resolvable stage.

The Dean verified that, based on his experience and observations, the greatest number of culinary students drop out during or after the first quarter of school. The second highest number of students drops occur in the second quarter, and third highest number of drops occur in the third quarter. Once a student completes the third quarter, the chances of a student successfully graduating are much higher.

When asked what, in his opinion, were the most important characteristic for student success, he responded:

“What I am finding out, and it is consistent with the literature, it boils down to readiness. What readiness is is a broad based category within the research. Most research breaks it down into three, four, five or six categories, finances, jobs and the like, but all of that boils down to readiness. You weren’t ready. They are not ready in the sense that they have a new component added into their life and they have to balance that component with the other components in their life. That becomes a bit of a balancing act. We may drop a student for finances, but in reality, it was the choices they made with their money that lead to the financial problem. I have a car, I have a house, I need a second job. Now I don’t have time for school and the second job.” (F. Virella, personal communication, November 15, 2007)

Facilities

By investigating the status of the pilot school in the remaining drop out reason categories, some insight may be gained as to the influence that a particular category may have on a student’s decision to drop out. Beginning with the facilities and curriculum aspects, the pilot school has three fully equipped kitchen labs, a dining lab that holds ten dining tables and has a seating capacity of approximately 45 people, a fully equipped bake shop and a fully functional storeroom with three independent walk-in coolers, one walk-in freezer and a large dry goods storage area. One of the kitchen labs has an in classroom computer system with overhead flat screens for viewing demonstrations both in the lab and out in the public area. According to the current corporate model for the pilot school, the pilot school should not have facilities of this size until culinary student enrollment is in excess of 500 students. The pilot school has approximately 170 culinary students enrolled at the time of this research (D. Hendricksen, personal communication, January 4, 2008).

The pilot school has also adapted the E-Companion/E-College web based classroom management tool for instructors. This tool enables instructors to setup a digital drop box for assignments, share documents and websites, enable students to discuss ideas openly and also keep track of grades (Student Success Leadership Committee, personal communication, 2007).

Curriculum

Curriculum can be another factor that influences the opinions that students have of the facilities or program. The curriculum at the pilot school requires the completion of 20 specifically identified culinary arts and baking and pastry classes and seven general education classes for a total of 112 credits, to earn an associate degree in baking and pastry. For an associate's degree in culinary arts, the school requires completion of 21 specifically identified culinary arts and baking classes and seven general education classes for a total of 112 credits. The school requires the completion of 38 culinary arts, baking and culinary management classes with six electives, and 12 general education classes for a total of 192 credits to earn a bachelor degree in culinary management (The Art Institute of Las Vegas Catalog, 2006-2007).

The pilot school has undergone curriculum realignment numerous times in the past several years. This included the changing of class descriptions, curriculums and course competencies and has caused some confusion. The benefit of the curriculum realignment is that it has brought greater consistency to the curriculum content provided throughout the pilot schools corporate network and will have long range advantages when it comes to establishing a standardized brand in their culinary programs. Although culinary education programs vary in curriculum content, the curriculum at the pilot school is for the most part, very similar to the curriculum offered at state-funded, private and other for-profit culinary education programs. The

primary difference is that the pilot school has a far more extensive Baking and Pastry degree program than most other programs.

Faculty Traits

The experience level, employment status, and educational qualifications of the faculty of the school have also been identified as influential factors. At the pilot school, the employment status of the faculty within the culinary department is identified in the following manner: out of sixteen total faculty members, seven are full-time instructors, seven are part-time instructors and two are substitute instructors. The total teaching experience of the seven full-time instructors is approximately 23.5 years, while the seven part-time instructors have a total of approximately 27 years of teaching experience and the two substitute instructors have approximately two years of teaching experience. The education level of the faculty is as follows: of the seven full-time instructors, one has a diploma in Baking and Pastry, four have associate degrees in some area of culinary arts, four have a bachelor degree, one has two bachelor degrees, and that same one will complete their master degree in May of 2008. Of the seven part time instructors, one is a European trade school graduate, one has an associate degree, three have bachelor degrees, one has a master degree and one will complete their master's degree in May Of 2009. One substitute instructor has an associate degree in culinary arts and one substitute instructor has a master degree in International Business. Most of the instructors have at least one professional certification and several instructors have multiple certifications. All faculty members are encouraged to pursue additional professional certifications, such as a certified culinary educator, a certified executive chef or a certified executive pastry chef through the American Culinary Federation on a regular basis (D. Hendricksen, personal communication, April 4, 2008).

Instructors typically carry a normal instruction load of 16 credit hours per quarter, with a reduced teaching load one quarter per fiscal year of 12 credits in order to participate in additional faculty development. All instructors are expected to maintain office hours in the amount of one hour for each class taught to be available to counsel or help students. The student/instructor ratio varies and depends on the size of the individual classes each quarter but is normally no more than 20 to 1. The maximum is 40 in a lab class, and 75 in a classroom (The Art Institute Catalog, 2006-2007).

There is also ongoing faculty training that is sponsored by the pilot school. Faculty development workshops are presented four times per year during each quarterly break. These workshops are designed to enhance faculty teaching. The workshops are generally planned and executed by members of the faculty development committee, which consists of faculty members and the Faculty Development Director for the pilot school. The committee holds two quarterly meetings to discuss various plans for faculty workshops, classroom time and management, classroom instructions, the latest technology teaching aids and other relevant topics (Student Success Leadership Committee, personal communication, 2007).

Internal Programs and Steps Taken by the Pilot School to Address Student Retention

The pilot school has developed several strategies to address the current reasons given by culinary students for dropping out. The following section describes some of the strategies that the school has implemented to address the social and adjustment issues that students face:

Student Services

Counseling

The pilot school provides counseling services that are confidential and are provided at no cost to the student. The counseling covers both individuals and couples for all enrolled students. This is a great benefit since mental health services are expensive and limited. The school will refer students to other counseling services not covered by the school and provide guidance as to the direction that the student who seeks counseling should pursue. Some of these referrals include recommendations to other community resources such as disability testing agencies, long-term mental health treatment and substance abuse programs. Many students have graduated after working through personal issues in counseling that could have resulted in withdrawal or termination. The pilot school employs a full-time counselor to be available for this student counseling. Often, after speaking with the student, the counselor discovers that some minor adjustments can be made or some problems can be worked through in a way that allows and encourages students to stay in school instead of dropping completely. The school also provides advice on where and how to obtain resources for student health insurance. The school believes that when students can access low-cost health insurance, they will be able to better attend to their health and well being and thus, have higher retention rates (J. Stepp, personal communication, April 4, 2008).

School Sponsored Housing

The pilot school provides apartments that are furnished and near school, dining, and shopping. This is not only beneficial to foreign students or students who attend

school from out of state, but also to students who may get kicked out of their homes or are in abusive relationships and may not be able to stay in school if they didn't have a place to live. Although the housing is located relatively close to the school, transportation between housing and school is also provided for those students living in student housing. For students that do not have vehicles, it makes it easier for them to make it to school (J. Stepp, personal communication, April 4, 2008).

Disabilities services and academic accommodations

This service assists students with documented physical, mental, and/or learning impairments that substantially limit their ability to function at school. Accommodations are put in place to “level the playing field” for students with disabilities (for example, extra time on tests, reduced course loads, tape recorded, sign-language interpreter). Many of the students do not know or have ignored their disabilities to the point that they start failing school (and/or stop coming to class because they don't understand). When the Student Affairs office can identify and help get these students academic accommodations, retention rates go up because they are more successful in the classroom. The downside is that students with disabilities do not always get tested and/or provide the documentation, in which case there is nothing legally that can be done. Although the pilot school does not have actual statistics, there is a possibility that a percentage of academic and attendance terminations are students with undiagnosed learning or mental disabilities. (J. Stepp, personal communication, April 4, 2008)

Social Activities and Programs

Social Activities

Group events and activities that promote community involvement and connections with other students such as movie nights, stress management/study skills workshops, sexual responsibility week, and an alcohol awareness week are made available each quarter. There are also several activities that are specifically offered to the culinary students. The pilot school sponsors and participates in a variety of culinary events each year, giving students the opportunity to donate their time and talent at the city's top culinary events. This provides experience on the job and exposure to notable chefs. Some of the events include: Bon Appetit Food and Wine Focus, Bite of Las Vegas, Epicurean Awards and the World Gourmet Summit (Student Success Leadership Committee, personal communication, 2007).

Peer Mentoring Program

This program was created almost two years ago to encourage a greater sense of belonging and allow students to make more connections within the school community. The program matches incoming students with upperclassmen "mentors" to serve as a friend and support system during their first two quarters at school. This has the added benefit of allowing mentors to gain leadership skills and feel like a part of the larger community themselves (J. Stepp, personal communication, April 4, 2008).

Academic Programs

To address some of the academic reasons that cause students to drop out, the school has adopted several programs to assist students in maintaining their academic eligibility. Most of these programs and activities are overseen by a Student Success Leadership Committee made up of faculty, staff, Academic Directors and the Dean of Student Affairs.

Ai101 (College 101)

This is a one hour course required for all new students. The course is designed to provide new students with the necessary tools and information for a successful academic experience at the pilot school (D. Snow, personal communication, April 4, 2008).

Transitional Classes

The pilot school requires students who need additional assistance to meet the educational requirements for English Composition and College Algebra to take transitional classes to help them be more successful in those classes (Student Success Leadership Committee, personal communication, 2007).

Tutoring Services

Students who are in need of tutorial assistance may request participation in computer-based, peer, or faculty-assisted tutorial programs. This form of tutorial assistance is provided at no additional charge. Through this program, faculty and student peers provide additional assistance to students wishing to strengthen their academic skills in a specific discipline. Peer tutors are students at the pilot school who have successfully earned a “B” or “A” in a specific course prior to serving in this capacity (Student Success Leadership Committee, personal communication, 2007).

Administrative Functions

Continuing Student Review (CRS) Meetings

This campus-wide process takes place on a weekly basis with the President, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Student Affairs, Counselor, Director of Housing, Director of Student Financial Services, Director of Accounting, Registrar, and the Academic Directors in an effort to gather needed information about at-risk students. The Registrar generates a list of at-risk students who have missed three or more consecutive class days. The list serves to identify and review potential, expected, and confirmed drops. The Academic Directors also gather information from faculty and staff members regarding the students who have been identified as at-risk. The Academic Directors contact the students from the list and keep progressive notes on their efforts with the students. The students are then referred to the appropriate resources such as tutoring, counseling and/or advising. The accounting supervisor also generates a list of at-risk students based on their financial standing. The team then works together to connect the students with the appropriate Student Financial Services member to address the issue (Student Success Leadership Committee, personal communication, 2007).

Financial Assistance

In an effort to provide financial assistance resources to those who wish to go to school but may not be able to afford it, the pilot school has several financial aid programs available to students. All of the programs begin with students being assigned a Financial Aid Officer. This Financial Aid Officer can familiarize the student with the various loans plans, federal and state grant programs, scholarships, as well as any federal

work/study programs, and part-time job assistance and veterans benefits that they qualify for (Art Institute Catalog, 2006-2007).

Conclusions

As previously discussed, the necessity of reducing the dropout rate at any educational institution is of great importance. In order to take effective measures to reduce the dropout rate, a stronger emphasis on gathering the specific information required to properly analyze the severity of the problem at each school is required and must be emphasized. This may involve an extensive review of every administrative procedure from the admissions process through exit interviews with every student.

The primary reasons for students dropping out of the pilot school program are their failure to attend class, and low academic performance. In actuality, both reasons may be interconnected. If a student doesn't go to class, it is difficult to get the information needed to perform well academically. On the other hand, if the student is not getting the information necessary to perform well from an academic standpoint, they are not motivated to go to class.

In reviewing all of the support programs available to students, the pilot school appears to have established strategies and programs to provide support in the predominant areas that cause students to drop out and has developed the necessary processes to closely monitor the ever changing status of students who may be in danger of either dropping out or being terminated for academic performance or attendance.

Recommendations

After reviewing the results and investigating the current programs that are in place to help increase student success at the school, this researcher recommends that the following steps be

taken to better determine the exact reasons for why students drop out in an effort to increase the persistence rate within the culinary department.

First, a survey should be created and conducted with all culinary students who either drop out prematurely or are terminated for either misconduct, academic ineligibility or a failure to meet the minimal attendance requirements. This survey should be given to each student when they leave the program in an effort to better determine the specific reasons why attendance terminations occur, how academic terminations came to be and the specifics of the unknown reasons. By better identifying the reasons and their possible causes, more insight regarding how to retain students may become available. Survey questions should be very detailed in each of the areas that remain somewhat undefined.

Second, the admissions application should be reviewed and evaluated to determine if all of the necessary demographic information that is needed to better evaluate reasons for dropouts is being gathered. The necessary information should include categories that identify, age, sex, ethnic background, financial status of parents, education level of parents, previous academic experience and success (degree of difficulty of previous classes taken as well as GPA) of the student applying and previous culinary knowledge, (either culinary education or industry work experience). Although investigating the admissions procedures of the pilot school was beyond the scope of this research topic, a review of all admissions procedures and practices may prove beneficial to establish whether the focus of the department is on enrolling students with an acceptable chance for success. This would include creating a specific list of criteria or the development of a student assessment survey that could determine if a student has an acceptable chance of success. The student assessment will then provide a basis for measuring all future

student dropouts and the reasons for their dropping out. The dropout rate after the utilization of the student assessment survey could then be compared to the dropout rates prior to the development of the assessment to determine whether culinary student persistence is improving. A comparative dropout rate analysis report should be generated to compare future dropout rates to past rates and permit these rates to be analyzed both annually and quarter by quarter. The retention comparison numbers should be able to identify any emerging trends that may occur in any quarter.

Third, any applicant for the program who appears to have several characteristics consistent with those of a high risk student should be interviewed by the Academic Director of the culinary department or his representative and several faculty members representing the various culinary areas that the student has expressed interest in. These interviews should be fact finding in nature and an assessment of the student's anticipated chance of success should be given to the Academic Director prior to the final acceptance decision. The Academic Director should be empowered to make the final acceptance decision in these cases. Statistics should be maintained to identify the ultimate result of those who are accepted, i.e. whether or not they completed the program and if they eventually dropped out, for what reason, and a specific program should be set up to ensure that everything needed to allow the student to be successful is in place.

Fourth, all faculty members should be assigned to teach classes that most closely match their specific areas of expertise. These faculty members should teach those classes for a minimum of three consecutive quarters. A review and assessment of the lesson plans established, competencies taught and the best practices employed should be conducted for each class after

each quarter with the Academic Director and a curriculum committee of other faculty members. By the time the instructor has taught for the third consecutive quarter, the Academic Director and the curriculum committee should perform a final review of all the lesson plans, the standardized midterm and final exams, class projects, grading rubrics and best practices for teaching that class and sign off on the teaching plan for that course. The approved teaching plan material will then be used by any faculty member who teaches that class in the future to insure consistency in measuring student competencies and dispensing course information. Any changes or additions to the class plan must be approved by the Academic Director for Culinary Education and the curriculum committee and will then become a permanent part of the class plan.

The last recommendation is that the peer mentor/ student ambassador program be better defined to the members of the culinary department. This program has very important, far reaching affects on the success and impressions that students form about the school and the program. It is also recommended that regular meetings be established between the culinary student ambassadors and the Academic Director of Culinary Education to bring any student concerns to the forefront and receive fast, effective resolutions to the issues at hand.

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APPENDIX A

Dean of Academic Affairs interview questions

Background

Q: Briefly describe your educational background and experience in the educational field.

Q: In the course of your career, how many experiences have you had in the analysis of persistence statistics and reports?

Q: Where and how did you learn your analyzing techniques?

Q: How long have you been directly involved analyzing persistence reports for Ai?

Q: How long have you been involved in student affairs and the programs design to increase student persistence?

Persistence Analysis

Q: Are you aware of how often persistence reports at are AiLV generated?

Q: Do you attend meetings in which persistence reports discussed regularly?

Q: If so, in what venues/meetings?

Q: What is your involvement in those meetings or discussions?

Q: Which goals or deadlines are usually established for you to attend to or follow up?

Persistence in AiLV Culinary

Q: Do you perceive a persistence problem in the culinary department at AiLV currently?

Q: If yes Why?

Q: If no Why not?

Q: In your opinion, does the culinary department have a greater persistence problem than other departments at AiLV ?

Q: What do you think are some of the causes of the culinary department persistence problem?

Q: In general, what are some of the strategies for preventing/addressing persistence in the culinary department?

Q: Do you think the school is doing enough to address the problems contributing to the high dropout rates or high risk students within the culinary department?

Q: If so, what do you think are the most effective strategies being used?

Q: If not, what additional steps could be taken or what additional programs would you like to see implemented?

Q: Are there reliable ways, in your opinion, to identify “high risk” or most likely to drop out students?

Q: If so, what are they?

Q: Do you think that the percentage of high risk students is greater in the culinary department than other departments??

Q: Do you think the persistence % in the culinary department has improved or gotten worse over the last two years?

Q: Have you ever experienced a major persistence problem in the culinary department the past?

Q: If yes, what steps did you take to help correct it?

Q: Is there pattern of frequency (by quarter) as to the likelihood of students dropping out? For example, do a certain % drop out after the 1st qtr. And a certain % drop out after the second etc.?

Q: If so, can you give any figures as to what quarters experience the most drops outs and what those average % are?

Q: What are, in your opinion, are the primary causes of culinary students at AiLV dropping out prior to the completion of their degree?

Q: What % of the persistence rate problem, in your opinion, is linked to the failure of the screening process or acceptance of a lower quality of student admitted?

Q: What does AiLV do to address the general high risk student issues?

Q: Are these strategies different from the strategies employed for culinary students?

Q: If so, what are they?

Q: Do you feel the general high risk student strategies that have been employed so far at AiLV have been affective?

Q: If no, what can AiLV do additionally to be more effective in preventing drop outs?

Q: If yes, how much have they improved the % of persistence?

Q: What other programs or counseling is being considered to make sure students get the best opportunity possible to be successful?

APPENDIX B

Student interview questions

Student Background Information

Name

Q: Where are you from originally?

Q: How long have you been in Las Vegas?

Q: What brought you to Las Vegas?

Q: Identify your age range:

A: 18-21 21-25 25-35 Over 35

Q: What was your GPA in high school?

Q: Did you come to AiLV directly after high school?

Q: How long have you been at AiLV?

Q: Do you have any other post secondary school experience?

Q: Has any other member of your family gone to post secondary school?

Q: Why did you decide to go to school here?

Q: What caused you to decide to go to school now?

Q: Did you ever think to go at a later/earlier time?

Q: If yes, why didn't you?

Q: If no, why was this the best time for you?

Q: Are you glad you went when you did?

Q: If yes, why?

Q: If no, why not?

Q: Do you feel this educational experience has been worthwhile?

Q: If yes, why?

Q: If no, why not?

Q: If you could do things differently with your schooling, what would you do differently?

Q: Does your family support your decision to go to school?

Dropout Information

Q: Do you know any students who have dropped out here at AiLV?

Q: If yes,

Q: How many approximately?

Based on your observations and experiences:

Q: What are some of the primary reasons why students have dropped out of culinary school at AiLV?

Q: How many students do you know of that have dropped out because of:

Q: Finances?

Q: Grades?

Q: Outside Commitments? (work/family matters)

Q: Illness?

Q: Faculty?

Q: Lost interest in the program?

Q: Misleading expectations from admissions department employees?

Q: Other? (Identify)

Q: Have you ever dropped out of school before?

Q: If you did why?

Q: Have you ever thought about dropping out?

Q: If yes, what were the circumstances that caused you to consider it?

Q: Who pays for your schooling?

Q: If your parents, how much does this affect your decision to not drop out?

Q: If you pay for it, how much does this influence your decision to drop out or not drop out?

Q: If loans, how much does this influence your decision to drop out or not drop out?