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## The impact of freshman success courses on freshman-to-sophomore persistence and academic achievement at a Wiche urban university and college

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THE IMPACT OF FRESHMAN SUCCESS COURSES  
ON FRESHMAN-TO-SOPHOMORE PERSISTENCE  
AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AT A  
WICHE URBAN UNIVERISTY  
AND COLLEGE

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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## Dissertation Approval

The Graduate College

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Entitled

The Impact of Freshman Success Courses On Freshman-to-Sophomore

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is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Impact of Freshman Success Courses on Freshman-to-Sophomore Persistence and academic achievement at a WICHE Urban University and College**

by

Velicia McMillan-Haron

Dr. Dale Andersen, Dissertation Committee Chair  
Professor of Educational Leadership  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This research investigated whether or not freshman success courses have an effect on persistence and/or academic achievement of freshman attending two large, urban, less selective WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) institutions, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. More specifically, this study set out to analyze the participation in a freshman success course with persistence and academic achievement of non-traditional freshmen at these WICHE Urban Universities. Finally, the study was also designed to identify the type or types of freshman success course(s) specifically offered at the WICHE Institutions participating in the study.

The findings of this study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the persistence rates or GPAs between students who participated in a

freshman success course and those students who did not. Similarly there were no statistically significant differences in the persistence rates or GPAs between non-traditional students who participated in a freshman success course and those non-traditional students who did not. However, the persistence rates of participants, including non-traditional student participants, were slightly higher, though not significant than those of non-participants. In addition, although no significant differences were found between the GPAs of participants and non-participants, at either of the institutions in the study, the average GPA, for both sub-groups, was above 2.5 Moreover, interpretation of survey data suggested that the freshman success courses, found in the present study, were designed to foster a sense of community, encourage involvement and promote integration into the social and academic life of their campuses.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“To ask an individual to break down doors that we have chained and bolted in advance of his arrival is unfair.” (Jonathan Kozol)

Teaching today’s students at urban universities is much more demanding than teaching the more homogeneous, better prepared student body of an earlier age (Lynton, 1995). In fact, some urban universities have recently reported dropout rates as high as 65% (Tinto, 1995). One half of all students who dropped out of college do so during their freshman year (Noel, 1985; Terenzini, 1986). Less selective urban universities report that six or seven in every ten freshmen do not return for their sophomore year (Comarow, 1999). However, the majority of students who leave depart during the first six to eight weeks of their beginning semester (Blanc, Debuhr, & Martin, 1983). Most students who drop out do so voluntarily and are heavily influenced by campus academic and social experiences (Cuseo, 1991). Knowing this, Tinto (1999) claims that universities and colleges have an obligation to do reasonable but educationally sound things to retain the students that they admit (pg. 4). Orientation courses, freshman seminars, and courses which combine both approaches, have been suggested as successful interventions.

Orientation courses appear to focus on student development and the needs of students

are viewed holistically. “The freshman seminar, on the other hand, is more concerned with the student’s academic adjustment and development and is more intellectually based. A third type of course tries to integrate both the personal and academic needs of students into one offering” (Gordon, 1989). Researchers claim that these freshman success courses respond to the needs of diverse student populations; counteract high attrition rates; and successfully integrate new students into campus academic and social systems (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Noel, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1975; Tinto, 1975). Simply put, freshman success courses increase college survival and persistence (Gardner, 1986).

“Unlike the more traditional role of the rural public, or private university located in a city, the modern, public, urban university has to meet the different educational needs of urban students” (Barnett & Phares, 1995). The term ‘nontraditional’ is often used to describe many urban, public university students because certain characteristics are consistent among these student populations (Barnett & Phares, 1995; Smith, Gauld, Tubbs, & Correnti, 1997). “The student body represents a variety of ethnic and racial groups, includes both residential and commuter students, has a substantial percentage of commuters, and includes a broad range of age groups” (Lynton, 1995). “Many students attend part-time, are likely to work at least part-time while enrolled, and have significant family responsibilities. The student body also contains many students who were the first in their family to attend college” (Smith, Gauld, Tubbs, & Correnti, 1997).

The nontraditional student body presents a pedagogic challenge for urban universities, because these students tend to have the highest rates of attrition (Lynton, 1995; Tinto, 1997). Tinto (1997) claims that retention rates are generally higher at private schools –

where students tend to receive more individual attention – than at public schools.

Retention is also higher at schools where most freshmen live on campus, because they are more likely to leave their high - school selves behind and be less conflicted over family obligations. Moreover, it is higher at more selective schools, where freshmen frequently are “more focused and goal-oriented” (p. 3).

Students who are dropout prone are not necessarily flunkouts; they leave because of a combination of complex factors (Levitz & Noel, 1989). Tinto (1987) claims that the primary causes of attrition are not only the dispositions of students, but also the character of their interactional experiences within the institution following entry and the external forces, which sometimes influence student behavior within the institution (p. 37). Urban universities must deliver support services to students early in their academic careers in order to encourage freshman persistence and retain diverse student populations (Cuseo, 1991). To increase persistence of non-traditional students at urban universities, academic and student affairs professionals must approach them in ways different from their traditional counterparts at residential colleges (Kuh & Vesper, 1991).

Studies by Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) and Tinto (1975) show that social and academic integration combined with faculty involvement, help to reduce student attrition rates and improve student retention. The notion that “urban universities should offer a freshman success course to new students is supported by research indicating that they result in increased levels of student involvement and out-of-class interaction with faculty (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992). Freshman orientation courses and academic seminars are both concerned with student behavior in the personal, academic, and career domains (Gordon, 1989). In fact, Upcraft and Gardner (1989) argue that courses that combine seminar form

(small class size and interactive pedagogy) and course content designed to ease the transition from high school to college are powerful ways of enhancing freshman success (p. 11). Regardless of whether a freshman success course is designed as an extension of orientation or an academic seminar, it attempts to create a positive attitude toward higher education in general and a specific institution in particular.

Researchers have taken a comprehensive and integrated approach in researching the impact of freshman success courses at four-year colleges and universities (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Fidler & Fidler, 1991). Evidence generated by studies indicate that course content and administrative delivery of these courses designed specifically for freshman can be and usually are effective (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Cuseo, 1991; Fidler, 1991; Shanley & Witten, 1990). Academic advising is often incorporated, and role models are provided in the form of successful students, faculty, and professional staff. Critical information about the institution is offered, and this often breeds familiarity with resources so that they are used more frequently and effectively. The most common measures of evaluation were grade point averages and persistence of participants (Cope, 1975).

#### Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately, none of the research previously reported has focused primarily on the impact that freshman success courses have on freshmen persistence at large, public, less selective urban colleges or universities. Institutions with these characteristics experience the highest attrition rates and thus are ideal candidates for offering freshman success courses (Clewell & Ficklen, 1987; Cope, 1975; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983). Research was needed that was planned and conducted to study the impact of freshman success

courses, at such large public urban colleges and universities, on student persistence and academic performance.

Specifically, one area of investigation not yet explored was the participation in freshman success courses at a WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) Urban University or College, and academic performance and persistence. In addressing this problem, it seemed logical to control for the individual variables of age, ethnicity, declaration of major, and full-time/part-time enrollment status of students, since these variables may be associated with academic performance and/or persistence.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not freshman success courses have an effect on the persistence and/or academic achievement of freshman attending two large, urban, less selective WICHE institutions, namely Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. More specifically, this study analyzed the participation in a freshman success course with persistence and academic achievement of non-traditional freshmen at these two WICHE Urban Universities.

#### Background for the Study

Research had not been conducted that would support or refute the claim that participation in a freshman success course has an effect on the persistence or academic achievement of students attending large, urban, less selective universities in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). At the outset it was intended to address this need by studying all three of the WICHE Institutions, namely of Boise State University, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The latter two readily agreed to and did subsequently participate in the study. Unfortunately, despite repeated attempts to find ways to convince them to participate,

Boise State University expressed an inability to allocate staff time to gather data for the study. Therefore, the study was conducted at only two of the three identified Urban WICHE Institutions: Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Metropolitan State College of Denver is among the largest public four-year colleges in the United States and is located in the heart of downtown Denver. The college offers major and minor fields of study, which focus on applied, career-directed education. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas is located on 335-acres in metropolitan Las Vegas and offers 180 undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs.

These institutions belong to WICHE, consequently share data, and participate in exchange programs for undergraduate study. Residents of all WICHE member states are eligible for such exchange privileges. These states are Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1998). Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities and identify with the classification of being urban universities as defined by the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities (Goven, 1999).

### Research Questions

The major research questions developed for the study are listed below.

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between freshmen-to-sophomore persistence and the variable of participation in a freshman success course while controlling for age, ethnicity, and declaration of major and full-time/part-time status of students? Do participants in a freshman success



course persist to the beginning of their sophomore (second) year in greater proportions than non-participants do?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the variable of concluding freshman GPA and the variable of participation in freshman success courses while controlling for age, ethnicity, declaration of major, and full-time/part-time status of student? Do participants in freshman success courses attain a higher GPA than non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the variable of freshman-to-sophomore persistence and the variables of participation in freshman success courses while controlling for age, ethnicity, declaration of major, and full-time/part-time status of student as non-traditional freshman? Do non-traditional student participants in freshman success courses persist to the sophomore (second) year in greater proportions than non-traditional student non-participants do?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the variable of freshman (first year) GPA and the variable of participation in freshman success courses while controlling for age, ethnicity, declaration of major, and full-time/part-time status of student as non-traditional freshman? Do non-traditional student participants in a freshman success courses attain a higher GPA than non-traditional student non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?

### Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a freshman success course on student persistence and academic achievement at large, urban, less selective WICHE Colleges and Universities. Moreover, it aimed to augment other studies on improved student persistence and academic achievement and the successful completion of a freshman success course. Specifically, the study sought to determine if students who complete freshman success courses that provide opportunity for academic and social integration, consistently show persistence and earn higher grade-point averages (Gardner, 1986, 1990; Stupka 1986, 1993).

There are many models, which provide explanations for why students leave or ‘dropout’ from college (Tinto, 1987). Unfortunately, there are a ‘feast of descriptive studies of attrition but a comparative famine of conceptual frameworks that explain its occurrence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977, p.26). “The conceptual frameworks that exist are divided in their attempts to explain attrition or what some refer to as student departure. Some theories try to describe dropout behavior, while others attempt to examine the process of departure. The theories that attempt to explain student departure are conflicting and include psychological, societal, and educational-environment approaches” (Tinto, 1987, p. 86).

“Psychologists first initiated research that focused on student departure. Psychological theorists focused on individual characteristics to explain dropout behavior. Individual inadequacies in characteristics such as personality, motivation, and disposition were thought to be factors that represented students that were incapable of persisting in university or college environments” (Helbrun, 1965; Rose & Elton, 1966; Rossman & Kirk, 1970). Cope and Hannah (1975) challenged the concept of citing personality types

in explaining why student dropped out. Their research claimed that there was no one 'departure prone' personality which is uniformly associated with student departure (Cope & Hannah, 1975).

Sharp and Chason (1978) also disagreed with psychological theorists. Instead of focusing their study on individual characteristics, they emphasized the influence of contextual variables, or the environment that students found themselves in, on student attrition (Sharp & Chason, 1978). "The psychologists' view of departure ignored the fact that the environment the individuals found themselves in influenced their decision to leave as well as their personality characteristics. Furthermore, the relationship of personality traits to departure was thought to be very much a function of the individual's personality interacting with the particular institution and student body being studied" (Sharp & Chason, 1978).

Psychological theories of departure viewed student departure as reflecting some shortcoming or weakness in the individual (Tinto, 1975). However, societal theorist believed that external forces were significant in shaping the situations that many students found themselves, and therefore placed emphasis on the impact of socioeconomic forces on the behavior of students (Sharp & Chason, 1978). Some societal theorist argued that colleges and universities promoted social stratification and the social stratification caused the systematic exclusion, or encouraged the departure, of various segments of the student population (Karabel, 1972; Featehrman & Huser, 1978). Karabel (1972) and Pincus (1980), both conflict theorists, argued that institutions of education were intentionally structured to perpetuate the interest of the socially and educationally elite.

Other advocates of societal theories advanced a structural, functional, view of society. These theorists believed that the meritocracy found in our society's structural function propelled our social order and a good example of this is found in the end result of student attrition (Sewell & Huser, 1975). In other words, the theorists believed that social origins, as defined by social status and race, did matter. However, they tended to be less important than those attributes of individuals and organization that directly affected their ability to compete in the academic market place (Tinto, 1987, p. 88).

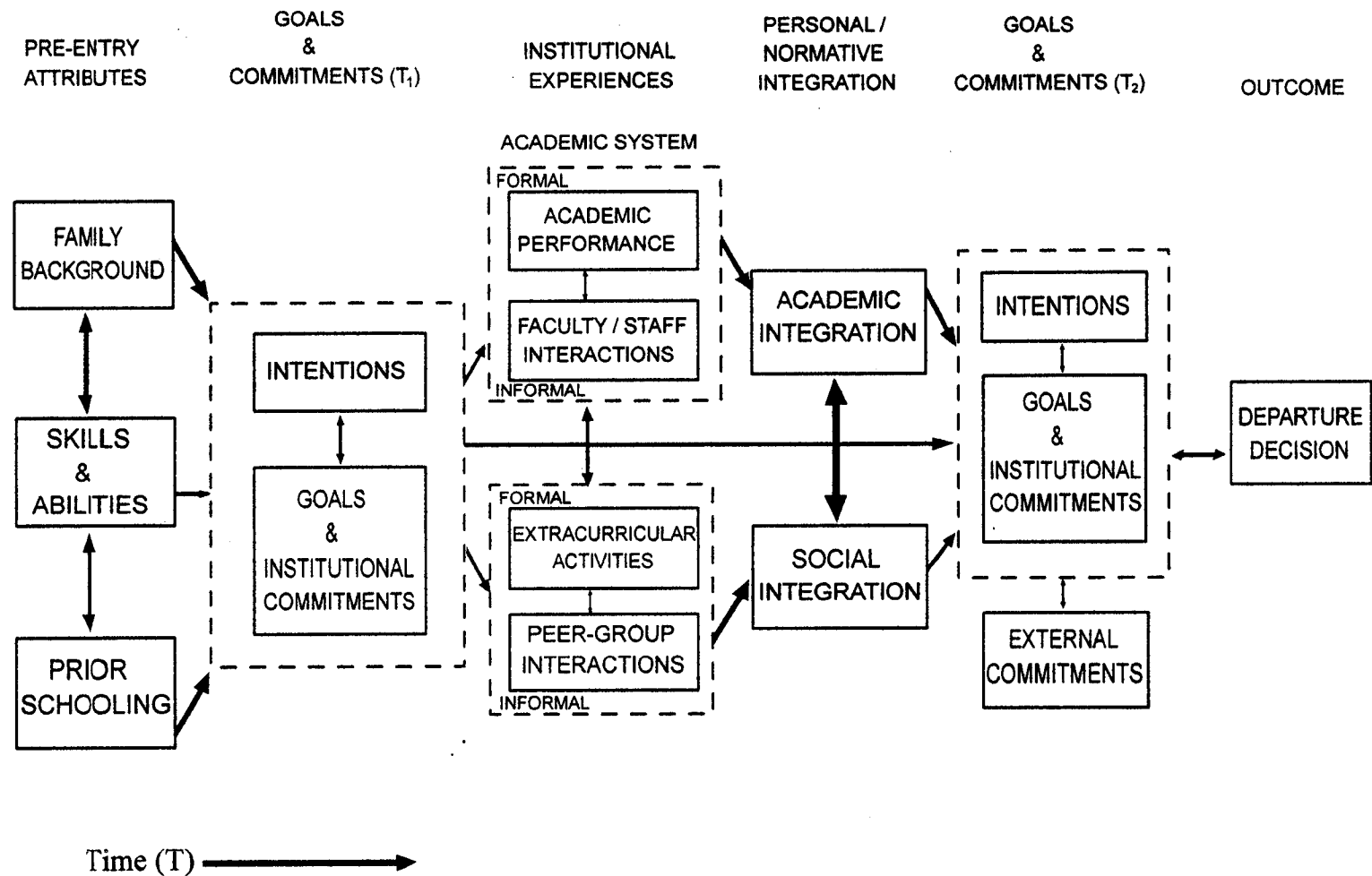
Several societal theorists took an economic view to examine student departure (Iwai & Churchill, 1982; Jensen, 1981; Manski & Wise, 1983; Voorhees, 1984). This third approach, derived from economic theories of educational attainment, stressed the importance of economic forces in student decisions to stay or leave (Tinto, 1987). This view suggested that students, given the limits imposed by their available resources, weighed their options and chose the ones that proved the most beneficial (Jensen, 1981; Manski & Wise, 1983). Thus, if dropping out outweighed the economic benefits of persisting, students would chose to depart from the college or university they were attending.

Finally, "educational-environment theories recognized the interrelationship between a student's pre-existing characteristics and the student's individual experience at the college or university he or she attends. This theoretical approach created a linkage between theories that focused on students characteristics, and the process of student departure that is influenced by the context in which it occurred" (Tinto, 1987, p. 90). Research conducted by Bean (1980) and Anderson (1981) discussed the contextual issues in persistence decisions but did not explain the process of student departure (Tinto,

1987). Spady (1970, 1971) was the first to develop a model that described the process of student persistence decision. He also was the first to focus on the relationship, or lack of it, between the characteristics of students and the characteristics of the college or university environment (p. 80) as a possible source of dropping out.

Vincent Tinto's (1975) Model of College Withdrawal (see Figure 1, page 12) examined the relationship between institutional characteristics and student persistence. "The model established student departure from college as a longitudinal process of interaction between the individual and the academic and social systems of the college or university (Tinto, 1987, p. 112). Tinto's model also claimed that a student's goal and institutional commitment changed while in college/university and this change influenced persistence (Tinto, 1975). The model identifies the interrelationships among the various factors and the relationships between these factors and the dropout decision.

Tinto (1975) began his development of the theory of student departure by reviewing the work of Arnold Van Gennep, a Dutch social anthropologist, and his study of the rites of passage in tribal society (p. 91). Van Gennep's (1960) theoretical model, focused on the movement of individuals from youth to adult status in society (xii). The Van Gennep's model promoted the concept of three distinct stages that marked the 'rites of passage' – separation, transition and incorporation. Van Gennep (1960) claimed that these three stages, through the use of unique set of rituals, helped to move young people toward adulthood (Tinto, 1987).



**Figure 1** A Model of Institutional Departure

Tinto (1987) applied Van Gennep's (1960) theoretical framework to the process of entrance and acclimation into college. As a result, Tinto's (1975) model viewed student persistence as the process of struggling through the stages of separation from past associations, transition into a new environment, and incorporation into the academic and social systems of the college (p 94). The model also suggested that the process of student departure reflected the difficulties students face in seeking to successfully navigate those passages (Tinto, 1987).

Unfortunately, Van Gennep's theoretical framework could not explain the informal processes of interactions within the university or college campus that lead to incorporation. In turn, and somewhat surprisingly, Tinto turned to Emile Durkheim's (1951) suicide studies to complete the development of his theory (Tinto, 1987). Tinto viewed suicide and institutional departure as analogous in that both represented the voluntary departure of an individual from a community (Tinto, 1987).

Durkheim (1951) identified four types of suicide among them 'egotistical suicide', which resulted from an individual's failure to become socially and intellectually integrated into a community. "Durkheim (1951) argued that satisfactory personal interactions resulted in social integration and intellectual integration. Intellectual integration resulted from shared values between an individual and the community in which they are involved" (p. 48). Thus, both insufficient social integration and intellectual isolation are necessary and sufficient conditions for egotistical suicide. The congruence of both conditions was often found within subcultures of larger communities (Durkheim, 1951, p. 49).

Tinto (1975) adapted Durkheim's (1951) descriptive model of egotistical suicide to institutional departure, and argued that student retention rates were closely tied to the presence of mechanisms that enable students to become socially and intellectually integrated into the institution (Tinto, 1987). Tinto's (1975) model extended this analogy and focused on the forces (academic and social) at play within the university or college setting, instead of on aggregated social conditions (p. 78). Tinto recognized that "institutional rates of student departure could result from discernible differences in the structure of institutional academic and social systems" (1987, p. 107). Furthermore, he predicted departure if freshmen stumbled at any of the three aforementioned crucial points:

- they don't break away from high school friends or family (separation);
- they don't accept their new role as college student (transition); and
- they don't bond with the college socially, academically, or both (incorporation) (Comarow, 1998, p. 1).

Longitudinal-process models of departure have increased over the years (Bean, 1980; Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975). These theory-based models have shown student departure or attrition as a longitudinal process involving a matrix of interrelated variables. The models contained the dependent variable (attrition or persistence), the intervening variables (goal and institutional commitment), and the background variables (usually ethnicity, gender, major, aptitude, rank in class, financial context) (Bean, 1982, p. 21).

The models suggested that organizational characteristics influenced goal and institutional commitment (intervening variables), which influenced whether a student



decided to withdraw from his or her college or university (Bean, 1982). Background variables are added to the model in order to understand their interaction within the environment of the institution of higher education. These models argued that the quality of the college or university's environment resulted from academic and social integration, which affected goal and institutional commitments and thus affected persistence.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) extended prior research (Bean 1979; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975) and determined that what happened during the freshman year may be more important than institutional commitment, a student's characteristics, educational aspirations or goals, or the aptitudes that students bring to college. In other words, institutional policies and programs that affect freshmen after they have arrived on campus may be determinants of freshman year persistence, which are as important as the kinds of students, enrolled (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979).

### Research Design

The present investigation was an exploratory/descriptive investigation of the differential effects of taking one or another type of freshman success course. It aimed to reveal if there was a statistically significant difference between the persistence rates and GPAs of students who participated in a freshman success course and of those who did not. The study was also designed to identify the type or types of freshman success course(s) specifically offered at the WICHE institutions participating in the study. Data was analyzed through the application of descriptive and/or inferential statistical techniques and procedures.

Freshman success courses are not required courses at either of the two Urban WICHE institutions in which the study was conducted. Through the years, some students have chosen to enroll in these courses while others have not. In addition, literature identifies

several types of Freshman Seminar courses (Barefoot & Fiddler, 1992; Cuseo, 1991). Therefore, the research was designed to classify the freshman success courses being offered and to identify, compare, and contrast their administrative delivery and course content.

### Subjects

The subjects of the study consisted of first semester, non-transfer freshmen at Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The two freshman classes consisted of a population of 4,142 first semester freshmen who entered one or the other of the two institutions during the Fall Semester of 2000. These two freshman classes were targeted for selection because they met two important criteria. First, these students could elect whether or not to enroll in a freshman success course at their respective institution. Second, data could be accessed that would reveal academic achievement levels and sophomore (second year) persistence rates for both of these freshman classes. Each of the two freshman classes was then divided into two subgroups based on whether or not each student participated in a freshman success course during their first semester (Fall Semester 2000). The two freshman classes were then traced to the beginning of the first term of Fall Semester 2001, their sophomore (second) year. In addition, the non-traditional students in each freshman class were identified. Non-traditional subjects were further divided into two sub-groups based on participation or non-participation in a freshman success course at their respective institutions. This was done to explore the effects that taking a freshman success course had on persistence and academic achievement of non-traditional students compared to that of non-traditional students who did not take a freshman success course. Non-traditional students were

defined as students who were 23 years or older, ethnic minority, enrolled part-time and/or had not declared a major.

### Instrumentation

Data was needed that would allow the researcher to compare academic achievement and persistence among these various classifications of students who did or did not participate in a freshman success course. In addition, a literature review had revealed that there are several ‘types’ of freshman success courses and suggested specific recommendations for the administrative delivery and course content of various types to encourage student achievement and persistence (Upcraft, Tinney & Garland, 1984). Therefore, the freshman success courses being offered at both institutions that participated in the study required classification.

Two instruments were developed to achieve these objectives. The first was a two-page Request for Student Data Memorandum (see Appendix page 140). It consisted of two segments, one designed to gather data on academic achievement and the other to gather persistence information on first semester freshmen, non-transfer students, who continued into their sophomore year (Fall semester 2001). These data allowed the researcher to compare persistence and academic achievement of freshman who participated in a freshman success course to that of freshman who did not participate in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester.

This instrument also elicited the following additional information on each subject: high school GPA, ethnicity (Caucasian, African American, Latino, Asian, Native American, Foreign National/International, Other), gender, age, declaration of major at entry, and full-time/part-time status of student. These descriptive data were critical to

analysis of similarities and differences between freshman success course participants and non-participants, as well as differences between non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants.

The second instrument was the 2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Universities and Colleges (see Appendix page 143). This survey instrument allowed for the collection of information used to classify the freshman success courses at each of the two institutions that participated in the study.

#### Collection of Data

In the spring of 2002 the Office of Institutional Analysis or Research at each participating institutions completed and returned the Request for Data Memorandum, thus providing the data on the two freshman classes identified for participation in the study. In addition, the Fall 2001 enrollment status (enrolled/not enrolled), or persistence information, for each of the students in the two freshman classes were also obtained by this process.

The director or coordinator of the freshman success courses, found in this study, collected and transmitted to the investigator the data needed to classify the participating freshman success courses at Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

#### Analysis of Data

The researcher, through the application of appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques and procedures, conducted analysis of the data collected. MINITAB Computerized Statistical Software Program was utilized to analyze the student data collected on both the participant and non-participant groups. Two Sample T-Tests applied at 95% confidence level was employed to provide additional analysis of the

student data and a .05 level of significance ( $\text{Alpha} = .05$ ) was used. Additional qualitative analyses was conducted to classify and compare the freshman success course used in the study and to produce results that have practical and beneficial implications for the institutions that participated.

### Significance of the Study

Research has shown that freshmen college students are the most likely to drop out of college (Astin, 1975; Banning, 1989; Cope and Hannah, 1975; Munro, 1981; Tinto, 1996). While institutions regularly attempt to create retention programs to offset student attrition, the future promises many changes in the diversity of students and in the complexity of institutions (Astin, 1977; Chickering and Havinghurst, 1981; Cross, 1971). This will present more intense challenges than ever to institutions to increase persistence rates.

Some urban universities are providing freshman success courses as one strategy to offset the attrition rates of their substantially diverse student populations (Barefoot and Fidler, 1991; Lynton, 1995). Yet, there is a dearth of evidence in the research literature as to the efficacy of this strategy. The present study was designed to explore whether freshman success courses located at two large, urban, less selective WICHE institutions, Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, appear to hold promise of having an impact on freshman academic achievement and on persistence. The impact of such courses on non-traditional participants versus non-traditional non-participants within this populations was also examined.

### Limitations

This is a descriptive study and several limitations are inherent when using this particular research. The most notables of these are:

1. The study is subject to those weaknesses inherent in accepting self-selection bias since the participants in the freshman success course were there on a voluntary basis. The very fact they elected to take the course may make them different from those who chose not to take the course.
2. The population involved in the study was limited to students who enrolled in Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas from Fall 2000 to Fall 2001. Generalizations cannot be made beyond these parameters.
3. The study did not control for uniformity of the course material taught in the freshman success courses, the training or teaching styles of the instructors; the assumption was made that the course objectives were quite similar.
4. The study did not include students who previously attended another college or university.
5. The study was delimited to a secondary analysis of information currently available in the Metropolitan State College of Denver and The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Student Information Databases.
6. This study was limited to the ability of the researcher to examine the data and interpret the findings, within the context of personal bias.

#### Definition of Terms

The following definitions shall function as the operational foundation for certain terms utilized for this study. The definitions are provided to establish clarity of purpose and common understanding of the terminology within this study.

- **Academic Seminars (generally uniform academic content across sections)** - These courses may be elective or required, inter-or extra-disciplinary in focus, and will sometimes be a part of the required general education core. These courses often focus on the 'higher order' academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).
- **Academic Seminars (various topics)** - In this type of seminar, each section will consider a different topic chosen by the faculty member who is the seminar instructor. These courses may evolve from any discipline. Students generally select their first- or second-choice seminar. In this genre, class size is often restricted to no more than 15 students (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).
- **Academic System** – The academic affairs of the college; the formal education of students. Activities center on the classrooms and laboratories and involve faculty and staff whose primary responsibility is to attend to the training of students (Tinto, 1987).
- **Attrition** – The category of unsuccessful students who left the college with grade point averages less than 2.0 (Dunphy, L., Miller, T. E., Woodruff, T., and Nelson, J. E., 1987).
- **Attrition rate** – A calculation used to measure the number of students who drop out divided by the number of students who start college at the beginning of the term.
- **Basic Study Skills Seminars** - These seminars provide some degree of remediation for students who are academically unprepared and focus on the most

basic study skills such as reading, dictionary use, note-taking, and basic writing” (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).

- **Commuter Student** – All students who do not reside in institution owned housing (Jacoby, B. 1989).
- **Drop Out** –When a person’s experiences at a given institution are seen by that person as a failure to do or complete what he or she came to the institution to do (Pascarella, 1982, p. 5).
- **Extended Orientation Seminars** - Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival, or student success courses, these courses are taught by faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, graduate, and upper-level undergraduate students. Specific content varies widely but is likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).
- **Freshman Success Course** – A term used when discussing a seminar/course that has been designed to help integrate freshman successfully into the academic and/or social systems of campus life, but has yet to be classified as an academic seminar, basic study skills seminar, extended orientation seminar, or a professional or disciplined based seminar.
- **Institutional Departure** – When the departure of persons from individual institutions of higher education occurs (Tinto, 1987, pg. 8).
- **Metropolitan /Urban Universities** – These are public and private universities that belong to the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities. They located in or near the urban center of a metropolitan statistical area with a population of at



least 250,000 whose primary mission includes teaching, research, and professional service. They offer both graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and two or more professional fields. The majority of the students enrolled come from the respective metropolitan areas of the universities and are highly diverse in age, ethnic and racial identity, and socioeconomic background. Many urban university or college students are transfers from the community colleges and other baccalaureate institutions. In addition, many of them are place-bound employees and commuters, and may require substantially longer than the traditional time to graduate, for financial and other personal reasons (Goven, A. 1999).

- **New Majority Student** – Students of color or over the age of 23, attend college part-time, live off campus, have families, and work more than 20 hours a week (Ehrlich, 1991).
- **Non-traditional Student** - Students who are 23 years or older, ethnic minority, enrolled part-time and/or have not declared a major.
- **Orientation courses** – Courses that focus on student development and the needs of students are viewed holistically (Gordon, 1989).
- **Persistence** – That category of successful students who have a grade point average of 2.0 or better and enroll for their sophomore or second year of undergraduate studies.

- **Professional or discipline-based seminars** - These seminars may be offered in any academic department or professional school (engineering, nursing, agriculture) and are designed to give students a basic introduction to the academic expectations and professional applications of the major (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).
- **Retention** – A category of successful students who are either currently enrolled, with grade point averages of 2.0 or higher (Dunphy, Miller, Nelson and Woodruff, 1987).
- **Returning Adults** – Students entering college 23 years of age or older.
- **Social and Academic Integration** – when students establish the work patterns and social bonds necessary to persist in college (Tinto, 1987).
- **Social System** – Centers about the daily life and personal needs of the various members of the institution. It is made up of those recurring sets of interactions among students, faculty, and staff, which take place largely outside the academic domain of the college. It happens outside the formal confines of the classroom in the residential life facilities and hallways of college (Tinto, 1987).
- **Traditional Student** – Caucasian student who enters college after the spring of their high school senior year, lives on campus, does not work, and has limited family obligations.
- **Voluntary Withdrawal** – the tendency for individuals to describe their withdrawal from college in terms of a conscious decision to stop going to college (Tinto, 1987, pg. 54).
- **WICHE**- The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a nonprofit regional organization established by interstate compact to help its

member states work together to meet the workforce needs and the education needs of their residents. WICHE encourages cooperation and sharing of resources among states and institutions, and with related private and public enterprises. Member and affiliated states are: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1998).

### Summary

The need to create effective methods to retain an ever-increasing non-traditional student population or ‘new majority student’ is a major challenge facing many urban universities and colleges (Hall, Mickelson, & Pollard, 1985; Kuh & Vesper, 1991; Pascarella & Champan, 1983; Tinto, 1987). Traditional methods implemented to retain students have been created based on the experiences of traditional-age, full-time students at residential colleges (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). However, the majority of students who attend large, urban, less selective, campuses are undergraduates who are students of color or over the age of 23, attend college part-time, live off campus, have families and/ or work more than 20 hours a week (Jacoby, 1989; Kuh, Arnold, & Vesper 1991; Tinto, 1987). Yet, social and academic integration combined with faculty involvement can help to counteract the attrition rate of non-traditional students (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas; Lynons, Strange, Krehbiel, & Mackay, 1991). Specifically, students who take advantage of campus resources such as the library, laboratories, recreational facilities, theater, and so on, usually realize social and academic integration unlike their counterparts who do not (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 626).

Urban university and college student populations must be approached by academic and student affairs professionals in ways different than their traditional counterparts at residential colleges and universities (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). While mentoring programs, numerous meetings with academic advisors and the benefits of living on campus all lead to successful social and academic integration (Upcraft, Gardner, & Associates, 1989)—the external factors of non-traditional and new majority students make accessing these traditional avenues unrealistic (Kuh & Vesper, 1991).

Freshman success courses can provide these students, who have many priorities, with contact to faculty and peers that ease the transition from high school or work to college in ways that enhance freshman success (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Gordon (1989) argues that regardless of whether the course is designed to continue the orientation to the campus, has an academic focus or is a combination of both, it creates a positive attitude toward higher education and toward the university or college the student attends. Researchers have used retention and GPA to measure the impact of these courses designed for the first year student. Unfortunately, research concerning the impact of freshman success courses has primarily been conducted at four-year colleges and universities (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Fidler & Fidler, 1991).

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether participants in freshman success courses have an impact on the persistence and/or academic achievement of freshman. The study was conducted at the urban WICHE institutions of Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Two important elements were investigated. The first was the determination of the specific type of freshman success

course offered at each institution. The second was to determine if participation in freshman success courses affect student success.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“When do any of us do enough?” (Barbara Jordan)

American institutions of higher learning have been expected to provide leadership in creating knowledge and addressing relevant, contemporary, societal issues. Universities in large cities have found themselves well situated to play this unique role of serving the needs and expectations of many of the individuals that comprise more than 80% of the country's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 1991). Educating this population has not been nor will it be easy. Unlike more selective traditional universities, urban universities have reported dropout rates as high as 65% (Tinto, 1975). Regardless of the characteristics of the student group or the university, students who dropped out typically did so during the first six weeks of their beginning semester (Blanc, Debuhr, & Martin, 1983). While various retention programs and services have proven to be very effective in retaining some categories of freshmen (Astin, 1975; Beal & Noel, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989), these programs were essentially designed to address the learning and personal development and experiences of traditional-age, full-time undergraduate students at residential colleges (Kuh & Vesper, 1991).

Students attending large, urban, less selective universities on the other hand, are typically minority students or over 23 years of age, who attend college part-time, live off

campus, have families, are academically underprepared and work more than 20 hours a week (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). These students are referred to as ‘non-traditional’ and have many competing factors for their time (Hardy & Williamson, 1974). Fortunately, evidence from research has revealed that the amounts of time students apply to academic tasks matters for all students and that the environments created at urban universities can have an impact on student success (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). Gordon and Grites (1984) claimed that freshman orientation courses and seminars have proven to be a plausible and effective method for retaining these ‘new’ students. They concluded that the role of these seminars or courses helped to retain the more diverse student populations (Gordon & Grites, 1984). A diverse student population is only one characteristic that helps to distinguish urban universities or colleges from their more traditional counterparts (Dietz & Triponey 1997, Grobman, 1988, Tinto, 1987).

### The Urban University

The term and mission of the ‘urban university’ have distinguished it from traditional universities. The mission has changed over time, however, the primary focus has been to address urban concerns since taking root in the early 1800s (Dietz & Triponey; Lynton and Elman, 1987). After World War II, urban universities became intentional about addressing the concerns of the modern society. Today, many urban universities and colleges have worked diligently to develop a relevant mission and set of characteristics (Grobman, 1988).

The university was born in the city – Salerno, Bologna, Paris, Prague. But American practice generally has been to establish campuses in small town and rural areas – this practice reflected the models of Oxford and Cambridge, the Puritan aversion to the “evils” of the city, the “booster” inclinations of small town, and the choice of

agriculturally oriented state legislatures in placing state colleges and universities outside the big cities. Campuses accepted this practice because they were oriented toward their middle-class students and toward national and world – not local – problems (The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1972).

Profiles of these institutions reflected their self-containment and isolation. They were most often populated by students engaged in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake (Lynton & Elman, 1987). However, scholars attending these early rural institutions of higher learning also were trained in the professions of language, law, philosophy, theology, and medicine to respond to the immediate needs of their society (Hathaway, Mulhollan, and White, 1990) as had been true in the earlier city institutions.

The contemporary ‘urban university’, took root in the United States in the early 1800s. During antebellum times, separate new facilities for advanced learning began to appear that were different from the training and research traditions typically associated with universities and higher education. These new types of institutions were committed to liberal arts education and teacher training. The popularity of the institutions was quickly recognized by the Congress in searching for answers to the call for assistance with domestic economic problems related to agriculture, engineering, and teaching. The attention of government resulted in the first Morrill Act (1862), which created land-grant universities in every state of the union. A major thrust of this legislation was to equalize opportunities for access to higher education (Dietz & Triponey, 1997).

“After World War II, institutions of higher learning were categorized to highlight the contrast between the intellectual and academic focus of traditional institutions on the one



hand and the interactive collaboration of other types of universities, ones that were more aligned to asocial constituents (Scott, 1984).” As a result, the urban university evolved and expanded to fit the demands of its ever-changing, knowledge-based local constituency (Dietz & Triponey, 1997). “Universities no longer concentrated on the initial creation of material knowledge; instead, the urban academy mobilized resources to transfer and disseminate technological advances to meet the needs of modern society (Clark, 1983; Norris, Delaney, & Billingsley 1990).”

Today, urban universities are located in, or near, an urban center with a population of at least 250,000. These institutions can be public or private and their mission includes teaching, research, and professional service. They offer both graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and two or more professional fields. The latter programs are strongly practice-oriented and make extensive use of clinical sites in the metropolitan area.

The majority of the students who attend these institutions come from their metropolitan regions. Moreover, the student population is highly diverse in age, ethnic and racial identity, and socioeconomic background, reflecting the demographic characteristics of their respective regions. Many transfer in from community colleges and other baccalaureate institutions, many are place-bound employees and commuters, and many require substantially longer than the traditional time to graduate (Goven, 1999).

Thus, “urban universities of the twenty-first century face issues and challenges that distinguish it from its predecessor of the twentieth century. The modern, public urban university has to respond to vastly different challenges due to its diverse setting and

rapidly evolving economic and demographic circumstances (Barnett & Phares, 1990, p. 67).”

### Urban University Students

In others words, the urban campus is not only for the privileged classes– the benefits of an education has now also been made available to people who live in the city who previously would not have had access to a formal university education. As a result, many urban university student populations are very diverse. Students attending the urban university tend to be of color or older, part-time students who stop in and out frequently throughout their college careers, more likely to be employed, whether full or part-time, predominately first generation college students, occupationally-oriented and poorly prepared academically; (Barnett & Phares, 1990; Dietz & Triponey, 1997; Kuh & Vesper, 1991; Rhodes & Lamar, 1990; Van Fleet, 1987). “ To provide access to this diverse population many urban institutions do not have highly selective admission requirements. This practice has caused urban universities to experience high attrition rates (Lynton, 1995).” It would, therefore, appear to be logical to examine some potential correlates of attrition.

### Attrition and Institutional Characteristics

Urban universities are a perfect example of how characteristics of a university or college effect rates of attrition (Lenning, Sauer, & Beal, 1980; Tinto, 1987). For instance, institutions that are more selective in the students that they enroll, tend to retain a larger proportion of their students than less selective institutions (Ramist, 1981). Tinto (1987) reported that private nonsectarian four-year colleges and prestigious Catholic women’s colleges tend to have the lowest rates of departure. These institutions indicated

that their mean rate of departure was only 13% (Tinto, 1987). The average rate of dropout for other universities that were very selective, both public and private, was 18% and 19% respectively (Tinto, 1987). Urban state colleges clustered about the mean for four-year institutions as a group (Tinto, 1984, p. 25). Specifically, popular urban colleges, reported first-to-second year retention rates from 62% to 70% respectively (American College Testing Program, 1995).

#### Attrition and Ethnic Minority Populations

During the past forty-five years, higher education has experienced an increase in college bound students. The growth has not only been actualized in total numbers of students attending college, but also in the attendance rate of students of color (Hodgkinson, 1996). This later increase has been largely absorbed by urban universities and the resulting student bodies are substantially more diverse (Lynton, 1995).

This diverse population has also contributed to the attrition rates of non- or slightly selective urban universities. For example, ethnic minorities as a group dropout of college in greater numbers than white students (Pascarella & Chapman, 1983). Research has shown that ethnic minorities left higher education without earning a degree at much higher rates than white students and attrition rates were more pronounced for African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students (Carter & Wilson, 1994; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Tinto, 1987). In fact, Hispanics and African Americans dropout permanently, at 64.6% and 54.5% respectively (Tinto, 1987).

#### Attrition and Adult Student Populations

In addition, the influx of adult students in these institutions has resulted in large numbers of working individuals with family obligations and a very different set of

experiences and expectations (Lyton, 1995). “Although the literature on adult students typically defines them as twenty-five or older, age alone does not describe the adult student, because a twenty- or twenty-two year-old can be starting college for the first time. Since traditional students are identified as eighteen to twenty-two years old, in residence, and studying full time, an adult student may be regarded as one who lacks one of these characteristics (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Returning adults represent more than 45% of those enrolled in higher education credit courses in the country - approximately six million people (Hirschorn, 1988). “This group is, in of itself, very diverse. Older age, commuter status, priorities outside the institution, and part-time attendance usually characterize the adult student population. Ironically, the term ‘freshman’ does not generally conjure up the image of a mature adult student (Copland, 1989, p. 304).”

Although the number of adult students entering higher education continues to increase (Holmstrom, 1973), they often feel ‘different’, out of place, and perhaps even out of sync with societal expectations. In short, adult reentry into higher education is fraught with difficulty (Copland, 1989), and some research has indicated that older students represent the highest attrition rates overall (Clewett & Ficklen, 1987; Cope 1978; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983).

#### Attrition and Commuter Populations

Over 80% of the students in American colleges and universities are commuter students (Jacoby, 1989). Students who attend urban institutions tend to live at home and commute to the campus (Schuh, Andreas, and Strange, 1991). Several major studies have identified commuters as particularly high risks for attrition (Astin 1975, 1977, 1985; Chickering, 1974; Tinto, 1987).

Unfortunately, the roots and focus of the student personnel profession are in the residence halls. Consequently, educators assume that commuters are like resident students except that they live off campus and that curricular and co-curricular offerings are equally appropriate for all students (Jacoby, 1989). This assumption has not served commuter students well (Jacoby, 1989; Kuh & Vesper, 1991).

“Commuter students – those who do not live in institution-owned housing, like adult students, are a diverse population. Their numbers include full-time students of traditional age who live with their parents, part-time students who live in rental housing near the campus, and adults who have careers and children of their own (Jacoby, 1989, p. iii).” The vast majority of ethnic minority students and women, are, and will continue to be commuters for reasons of age, life-style, family circumstances, and financial necessity. Students with spouses, children, and/or full-time jobs are not likely to live in residence halls – nor are many students from ethnic cultures that place the highest value on the maintenance of the family unit (Wright, 1987b).

These adult, part-time and minority students enroll more heavily in urban four-year institutions (Jacoby, 1989). Furthermore, it can be estimated that 69% of all entering freshman are commuters (Rice, 1989). This group is not only large but also diverse. Indeed, one model was developed that identified 256 categories of commuter students who could be found on any given commuter campus based on such factors as age, gender, academic ability, income status, educational plans, remedial problems, and other similar variables (Schuh, Andreas and Strange, 1991). And, the attrition rates of this diverse commuting population are significantly higher than those of residential students (Astin, 1973, 1975, 1977; Chickering, 1974).

Researchers have clearly identified several factors that impact the retention of freshman commuters (Rice, 1989). Investigations have indicated that the more students became involved with the collegiate experience, interacted with their collegiate peers and faculty, and became integrated into the college, the more they persisted and developed academically and socially (Astin, 1977, 1984; Tinto, 1975, Pascarella and Terenzini, 1977, 1980a; Beal and Noel, 1980; Noel, Levitz, and Saluri, 1985). In other words, student learning is more a function of the amount of effort students devote to educationally meaningful activities rather than the type of institution attended (Astin, 1984; Pace, 1987; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). However, as stated previously, most of what is known about the learning and personal development of undergraduates is based on the experience of traditional-age, full-time students at residential colleges (Kuh and Vesper, 1991).

Thus, most co-curricular programming serving commuter students, is patterned after and/or is focused on the residential student (Hardy and Williamson, 1974, p. 47). This approach has not worked. In order to increase gains the diverse student population at urban institutions must be approached by academic and student affairs professionals in ways different than their traditional counterparts at rural residential colleges (Kuh and Vesper, 1991).

There are some obvious parallels between non-persisters and commuters in terms of their lack of involvement, interaction, and integration with the college experience (Rice, 1989). However, there is a huge difference between the non-persisters found on traditional campuses, and commuter students. The commuter student is less disposed than residential colleagues to engage in the social and academic encounters that can

enhance their educational persistence (Kuh and Vesper, 1991; Jacoby, 1991; Rice, 1989). Academic and student affairs professionals must consider this important fact when attempting to counteract attrition at urban universities and colleges (Chickering, 1974; Jacoby, 1989; Kuh and Vesper, 1991; Rice, 1989).

Since the 1960s, theories and models of student development have increasingly become the basis for the education and practice of student personnel administrators. The models and theories have been built largely on research on white, middle-class, traditional- age students at predominantly private, four-year residential colleges (Barr et al., 1988). Academic and student service personnel have considered living on campus as the normative experience of college students (Jacoby, 1989). Furthermore, they have assumed that commuter students' development would parallel that of residents or that commuters' environments do not facilitate development. A similar problem exists when staff views commuters as primarily evening or part-time students who are not interested in or do not need student services (Stewart and Rue, 1983). In order to increase gains, non-traditional students at urban universities and colleges must be approached by academic and student affairs professionals in ways different from their traditional counterparts at residential colleges (Kuh & Vesper, 1991).

#### The Causes of Attrition

It is true that large concentrations of non-traditional students have made it difficult for urban universities and colleges to retain their student populations (Carter & Wilson, 1994; Jacoby, 1989; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Tinto, 1987). However, urban universities need to resist the urge to follow traditional models for retaining their students. Instead, they should take the time to recognize the forces of attrition and implement programs and services that are designed to meet the unique needs of their

specific diverse student populations (Noel & Levitz , 1983). Most students who are susceptible to 'dropping out' do not usually flunk out or leave involuntarily (Noel & Levitz, 1983; and Tinto, 1987). Instead, they leave voluntarily.

Tinto (1985) claimed "nearly 85 % of student attrition is voluntary" (p. 32.). And, Noel and Levitz (1983) and Tinto (1985) claimed that this voluntary attrition was caused by a combination of student characteristics: academic boredom, a sense of irrelevance, limited or unrealistic expectations of college, academic underpreparedness, transition difficulties, uncertainty about a major or a career, and the need to commute. In addition, Tinto (1987) argued that incongruence and isolation contributed to a student's lack of integration and membership in the campus community and thus, increased the likelihood of student attrition (p. 6). An examination of these factors would seem to be in order.

#### Academic Boredom

Students, primarily freshmen, who enroll in courses that they are overprepared for, often feel a lack of challenge (Levitz & Noel, 1983). When the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986) surveyed 5,000 undergraduates at two-year and four-year institutions in 1984, almost 37 % said they were bored in class, and 35 % said that part of their undergraduate work repeated work already covered in high school (p.29). These findings suggested that a great number of students are frustrated and probably leave because of academic boredom (Levitz & Noel, 1989).

#### Irrelevancy

General studies courses may prove to be irrelevant, and boring, to many students, especially to those who have chosen majors and have career goals (Levitz & Noel, 1989). In the Carnegie Foundation Survey (1986), nearly 40 % of undergraduates considered



general studies irrelevant to the subjects that interest them the most (p. 30). Many teachers and advisors forget to explain to students the benefits and usefulness of an education. This is compounded by the fact that many students arrive on campus with misplaced or distorted expectations about university learning and campus life (Levitz and Noel, 1989).

#### Limited or Unrealistic Expectations of the University

The National Institute of Education's (1984) report, Involvement in Learning noted: "Many students enter college with only vague notions of what undergraduate education is all about, where it is supposed to lead, and what their institutions expect of them" (p.39). The demands that come with attending college can become overwhelming if students have not developed realistic expectations of themselves and of the school they are attending (Astin, 1975). In addition, many students do not know if they will be satisfied with the college that they have chosen to attend. For example, only 54% of the 192,000 students that entered college in 1985 said that they would be satisfied with college (Astin, 1985). The remaining 46 % of students who expected to be dissatisfied were considered attrition risks (Astin, 1985).

#### Low-Income

Urban universities and colleges have had significant populations of students drop out as a result of academic boredom and the inability to find relevance in their studies. In addition, many students that fall victim to attrition are low-income students. The populations of low-income students, on urban campuses, are usually the children of parents who have relatively little education and are the first members of their families to attend college (Valverde, 1985). Many are ethnic minority persons who attended poor

public schools and lack career goals (Beal & Noel, 1980; Friedlander, 1980; Maynard, 1980; Meyers & Drevlow, 1982).

Although not all low-income students are ethnic minorities they make up a significant number of the low-income student population. Bayer and Boruch (1969) conducted a nationwide study involving some 243,000-college freshmen, of which 12,300 were African American. The study showed that 56 % of the African Americans were from homes in which the parental income was less than the average yearly wage (Bayer & Boruch, 1969). Because low-income students are in financial need they are likely to work off-campus, be part-time students and select their university or college of choice by proximity to home or because it offers low tuition (Roueche & Snow, 1977). Thus, when low-income students select four year institutions to attend, or transfer to, they are likely to live off campus and enroll in urban commuter colleges instead of prestigious research institutions (Valverde, 1985). Unfortunately, because many low-income students received an inadequate public education they also enter their institution of choice academically underprepared (Roueche & Snow, 1977; Valverde, 1985).

#### Academic Underpreparedness

In a study conducted by the American College Testing Program, over half of the 300 colleges and universities surveyed had programs for the academically underprepared students (Noel, Levitz, & Kaufmann, 1982). Many of the students entering these institutions were not poor achievers in high school, did not score low on standardized tests before they left high school, and were neither culturally nor educationally disadvantaged (Moore & Carpenter, 1985). This is not the case, however, at many urban universities or colleges. Instead, the decline in the nation's literacy rates contributes to

students' underpreparedness; the average high school graduate completes high school with better than a B average and yet reads below the eighth-grade level (Roueche, & Kirk, 1970). As mentioned, many colleges and universities have implemented academic support programs (Noel, Levitz, & Kaufmann, 1982). However, many more campuses fail to assess the basic skill levels of students and provide course placements that match the competency of individual students (Moore & Carpenter, 1985). Moreover, academic support programs and services need to be intrusive, because most underprepared students are inexperienced and will not seek out the services they so desperately need (Levitz & Noel, 1989).

#### Transition Difficulties

Most students, especially new students, are reluctant to request academic support services because enrolling in college means entering a new and demanding environment. College and university students need peer and faculty support to persist in college (Haagen 1977; Cloward & Jones, 1962; Spady 1971; and Rootman 1972). Students who dropped out of college reported less social interaction than those students who were found to persist (Cope, 1978). Many students discover that membership in student organizations and informal social systems, help them to connect with the college or university campus they attend (Astin, 1971, 1975).

Participating in student organizations and developing peer relationships with other students may help with student persistence, but alone it may do so at some expense to the intellectual and social development of the student (Theophilides & Terenzini, 1981; and Endo & Harpel, 1982).

### Lack of Student-Faculty Contact

Of all the varieties of student contact which can occur on the urban university or college campus, frequent contact with the faculty appears to be the most important element in student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini 1979; Terenzini & Pascarella 1980; Pascarella & Wolfle, 1985). Contact with faculty is associated with heightened intellectual and social development (Tinto, 1987), especially when the interaction focuses upon discussions of intellectual or course-related matters (Spady, 1971; and Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977). Studies conducted by Spady, (1971) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) have shown that course related discussion between faculty and students have a positive effect on student retention. Specifically, faculty-student contact is strongly associated with continued persistence when the contact extends beyond the formal boundaries of the classroom and the discussions include broader intellectual and social issues (Tinto, 1987).

"This does not mean, however that what goes on inside the classroom is unimportant to decisions regarding departure. Quite the contrary" (Terenzini & Pascarella 1978, p. 363). The way in which faculty interact with students inside the classroom influences academic performance and perceptions of academic quality, as well as sets the tone for further interactions outside the classroom (Astin, 1975). Moreover, classroom behaviors influence student perceptions as to the receptivity of faculty to further student contacts outside the classroom (Astin, 1975).

### Uncertainty About A Major Or A Career

College students that have unclear, unrealistic, or uncertain academic and career goals have been identified in several attrition studies as a 'dropout- prone population' (Abel,

1966; and Astin, 1975). "Some of the general factors identified as causing attrition are also used to describe the undecided student population" (Gordon, 1985). These characteristics include lack of career objectives, unsure degree expectations, selection of certain majors (for example, science majors are more persistent than many other majors are), absence of or a change in career goals, and a lack of adequate advising services (Astin, 1971; Cope & Hannah, 1975; and Pantages & Creedon, 1978).

Astin (1975) found that students who aspire to attend graduate school or pursue a doctorate as undergraduates are least likely to drop out of college. Even dropouts who have high academic ability usually claim that they dropped out as a result of not knowing what to study (Levitz & Noel, 1989). Of the one million students who took the ACT assessment in 1984, two-thirds indicated that they were not fully sure of their career choice (American College Testing Program, 1984a). Career and academic uncertainty is much more prevalent among freshmen than any other undergraduate population and indicates a need for academic and career advising (Levitz & Noel, 1989).

#### Commuting to Campus

Commuter students may have trouble when attempting to make contact with an advisor, faculty, or other students because, frequently, they are attending classes between other responsibilities (Tinto, 1987). Urban campuses, in particular, have large populations of commuter students. At the University of Akron, an urban university, a survey of first-year students revealed that more than one-half (50.9 %) lived with their parents, a spouse, or a committed partner, while more than one-third (37.2 %) lived off campus with friends or roommates (University of Akron, 1995b).

Thus, commuter students are less likely to become socially integrated into the campus community because they spend less time on campus and miss the opportunities to engage in discussions with the faculty or to develop strong peer relations with other students (Chickering, 1974). In other words, external demands on commuter students make it difficult for them to interact with college or university's major agents of socialization - faculty and students. Consequently, many commuter students do not integrate well academically and socially and thus experience high attrition rates (Smith, Gauld, Tubbs & Correnti, 1997).

Three major studies identified commuting students as being particularly high attrition risks (Chickering, 1974; Astin, 1977; and Beal & Noel, 1980). It is worthy to note that 80% of undergraduates nationally are students who commute to campus (Stewart & Rue, 1983) and although older students are quite often commuters, most commuters are not older students (Stewart, Merrill, & Saluri, 1985). During the 1980's commuting students became the norm and colleges and universities have yet to effectively address the needs of their changing student population and to successfully integrate them into campus communities (Stewart, Merrill, & Saluri, 1985).

#### Integration and Community Membership

The relationship of these factors to one another is best presented by Tinto (1987):

"The concepts of integration and community membership appear to best describe how those experiences impact student persistence. Experiences, academic and social, which serve to integrate the individual into the life of the college, also serve to heighten attachments and therefore strengthen individual commitments both to the goals of education and to the institution. Conversely, the lack of

integration and the absence of membership serves to undermine commitments and thereby heighten the likelihood of departure.

In the academic and social life of an urban college, lack of integration takes on two distinct forms that may apply either to the academic realm and/or to the social realms of college life. It may be seen in the incongruency of the individual with the social and or intellectual life of the institution. However, lack of integration may also be reflective of the isolation of the individual from the life of the institution" (Tinto, 1987).

### Incongruence

Incongruency reflects the person's evaluation of the manner and degree to which the social and intellectual life of the institution serves his or her interests and needs (Tinto, 1987). Tinto claimed that, "departure in this case frequently leads the students to transfer to another institution deemed more suited to his or her needs and interests" (1987, p. 5). Another force of incongruence, one that is of concern to all institutions, is that which arises when students find the intellectual demands of the institution insufficiently stimulating. As cited earlier by Levitz and Noel (1989) students experience academic boredom and can not find the relevancy in taking general education courses. Tinto (1987) concluded that these students dropout not only because they feel out of place, but also because they are bored, and find required courses irrelevant.

### Isolation

"Unlike incongruence, isolation is largely the outcome of a lack of interaction between the person and other members of the institution. A student drops out not because of a mismatch but from the absence of significant social and /or intellectual contact. Many

students who feel isolated dropout because of not having made contact or having established membership in the life of the institution" (Tinto, 1987).

### Features of Effective Retention Programs

When student needs are not met a lack of congruence or incompatibility can arise in many ways. Meeting the needs of a changing student population on an urban campus isn't easy, however it can be done. Services and programs can be designed to curtail the amount of alienation that a student feels when matriculated at an institution (Browne, 1980, p. 7). "To retain students urban campuses have taken different approaches, but those who have been successful have a few things in common: the way they think about retention, where they place emphasis on retention efforts, and where they direct their energies" (Tinto, 1987).

### Colleges as Social and Intellectual Communities

A common feature of effective retention programs is their ability to place an emphasis upon the communal nature of institutional life. Programs that successfully retain students commonly stress the manner in which their actions serve to integrate individuals into the mainstream of the social and intellectual life of the institution and into the communities of people which make up that life. Effective retention programs not only provide continuing assistance to students, they also act to ensure the integration of all individuals as equal and competent members of the institution" (Tinto, 1987, pp. 120 -121). These types of programs constantly emphasis the need for frequent and rewarding contact between faculty and staff members of the institution, especially outside of the classroom (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Wolfe, 1985).



### Institutional Commitment to Students

"A second common feature of effective retention programs is their constant commitment to the students they serve. Campuses that successfully retain students continually ask themselves how their actions serve to further the welfare of the students. Effective retention programs create caring communities and direct their energies toward helping students further their own needs and interest. The commitment of these communities generates a reciprocal commitment on the part of the student to the institution. This commitment is the basis of student persistence" (Tinto, 1987).

### Educational Commitment

Lastly, however the secret of effective programs lies in the fact that institutional commitment must go beyond the mere retention of students. The social and intellectual growth, not their mere retention, is the mark of effective retention efforts (Tinto, 1987). Tinto (1987) suggested that, "the key to successful retention -programs is a commitment to the educational goals of higher education, namely that students be educated, not merely retained until degree completion. The education of students -- their social and intellectual development -- is the proper goal of institutional action. A commitment to the goals is the turnkey about which successful retention programs are built" (p. 9). The support of this goal should be most evident during the freshman year.

### Methods of Student Retention

A variety of programs exist to promote and retain students who have difficulty persisting (Astin, 1975, 1977; Beal & Noel, 1980; Boylan, 1994; Crockett, 1985; Levitz & Noel, 1989; Titley, 1985; Perigo & Upcraft, 1989). Boylan (1994) enumerated the most frequently identified strategies for a successful developmental program: developmental courses, program organization, mandatory assessment, tutoring,

counseling/advising, and program evaluation. Despite implementation of the approaches mentioned here, attrition and dropout rates continue to grow for a significant portion of the student population at urban institutions.

“The first year of college is a critical period in the retention of students. It is during this time that students are required to separate themselves from past associations and patterns of educational participation and make the transition to the new and possibly much more challenging life of college. As discussed earlier, many whose prior academic training has not adequately prepared them for college-level work may have difficulty adjusting” (Tinto, 1987, p. 148). Still others, may experience difficulty prioritizing their time and other commitments because they commute, have families, and/or work.

Urban universities and colleges must design and implement activities and programs that emphasize the need to help freshmen connect to the environment and work toward their academic and career goals to increase persistence rates (Astin 1975, 1977; Beal & Noel 1980; Cohen & Brawer 1970; Cope & Hannah 1975; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfle, 1986; Roueche & Roueche 1982; Tinto 1975; 1987).

To help students achieve these objectives institutions must adopt the concept of ‘front loading’: putting the strongest, most student-centered people, programs, and services in the freshman year (Forrest, 1982, p. 44). Front loading efforts focus on areas such as orientation, frequent student/adviser and student/teacher contact. However, urban campuses have become places with large part-time enrollments and enrollment is not always continuous and non-traditional students cannot participate in frequent student/advisor meetings. Thus, retention strategies must also focus on, and be available to, all types of students (Lynton & Elman, 1987, p. 87).

In addition, every student must receive many opportunities to develop academic skills and build strong peer relationships. Orientation programs, academic advising, mentoring programs, teacher development, on-campus housing, and student activities help students connect academically and socially to the campus. Urban campuses must also provide students with learning environments that help them make successful transitions from high school or work to college (Levitz & Noel, 1989). Academic support programs and Freshman Seminar type courses appear to provide students with additional learning environments that assist them with issues of transition. A closer look at these strategies now seems in order.

### Orientation Programs

"Coming as it does at the beginning of the college experience, orientation serves as the transition cushion between past and future learning experiences" (Titley, 1985. p. 221).

Orientation programs are designed to help freshmen and transfer students make the transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment and enhance their success (Perigo & Upcraft, 1989). Orientation exists to help students succeed academically and to help students with their personal adjustment to college.

"During orientation, students should become familiar with the college or university academic requirements, learn the academic demands of the classroom, and be aware of the academic support services that are available to them. Students should also be provided with information on how they can actively participate in student organizations, and if appropriate how to participate in programs in the residence halls" (Stewart, W. & McCann, W., 1967; Shaffer, 1962). Orientation programs help to retain students (Beal & Noel 1980; Lenning, Sauer, & Beal, 1980; Ramist, 1981;).

### Academic Advising

Academic advising is also a potent retention force on the urban campus (Crockett, 1989). The importance of academic advising in increasing student persistence is well-documented (Baldrige, Kemerer, & Green, 1982; Beal & Noel, 1980; Crockett, 1989; Forrest, 1982; Kramer & Spencer, 1989). Unfortunately, the academic advising programs that can be found on many campuses are considered unsatisfactory (Kramer & Spencer, 1989). For example, a study conducted by Beal and Noel (1980) compiled and analyzed information from over 944 institutions. In this comprehensive study college administrators identified inadequate academic advising as the major characteristic linked to attrition at their institution (Beal & Noel, 1980).

In order to be effective, academic advising must involve more than course selection and scheduling (Crockett & Crawford, 1989). Urban campuses should implement O'Banion's (1972) five-step advising model that provides a logical and sequential set of steps to the advising process. O'Banion's five steps are (1) exploration of life goals, (2) exploration of career goals, (3) selection of major or program of study, (4) selection of courses, and (5) scheduling of course. The best academic advising is student centered and concentrates on how student, especially freshmen, can use the advising they receive to fit into the curriculum (Crockett & Crawford, 1989).

For example, "a student seeking clarification of a chosen major might be directed to a major-related academic club which provides an opportunity to meet peers and faculty. Or the adviser might help the student get involved in study groups, research projects, field trips, cooperative education, and other career-related activities, all of which provide opportunities for freshmen to become involved in the

institution and, most important, to develop academically” (Kramer & Spencer, 1989, p. 100).

### Mentoring Programs

Academic and career-related activities are excellent ways to get students connected to the urban campus. The earlier an advisor can help their students make this connection, particularly during the freshmen year, the better an institution has in offsetting attrition rates (Astin 1975, 1977; Beal & Noel 1980; Cohen & Brawer 1970; Cope & Hannah 1975; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfle, 1986; Roueche & Roueche 1982; Tinto 1975; 1987). Levitz and Noel (1989) also argued that new students, as well as returning students, needed to feel attached to some person in the institution. A powerful way to ensure that these attachments are made is through mentoring (Johnson, 1989).

Mentoring occurs through a one to one relationship between an older person and a younger person that is based on modeling behavior and extended dialogue between them (Lester & Johnson, 1981). Mentoring requires personal, one-to-one contact. Daloz (1986) called mentors guides who lead us along the journey of our lives. In addition, Jung (1958) says that mentors may appear where "insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning, etc. are needed but cannot be mustered on one's own" (p.71).

"Mentoring involves dealing with individuals in terms of their total personality in order to advise, counsel, and/or guide them" (Cross, 1976, p. 205). Mentoring can take place formally in class or as part of a structured program, or it can happen informally. Informal mentoring, extends beyond the formal boundaries of the classroom and the discussions include broader intellectual and social issues (Tinto, 1987). In fact it has been determined that: (1) informal out-of-class contacts with faculty are positively associated

with student satisfaction with the total college experience (Carter & Wilson, 1994; and Pascarella & Terenzini, 1976); (2) the quality of these informal interactions may be as important in influencing potential dropouts to remain as the frequency of the interactions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1976); (3) student-teacher informal contacts appear to make the most significant impact upon persistence when students are apparently withdrawal-prone (Tinto, 1975); and (4) informal interaction correlates with students satisfaction with classroom instruction.(Astin, 1977).

### Teacher Effectiveness

This does not mean, however that what goes on inside the classroom is unimportant to decisions regarding departure. Quite the contrary" (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1978, p. 363). The way in which faculty interact with students inside the classroom influences academic performance and perceptions of academic quality, as well as sets the tone for further interactions outside the classroom. Classroom behaviors influence student perceptions as to the receptivity of faculty to further student contacts outside the classroom (Astin, 1975). Roueche & Roueche (1985) indicated that faculty must create learning environments where students feel comfortable and where students' personal and academic goals are met. When these types of environments exists, students persist, because the students' commitment to learning is strengthened (Forrest, 1982; Aitkens, 1979; & Bean, 1980).

But how do urban campuses create these types of environments? "Many institutions have decided to put their most effective teachers in general education courses. General education courses represent an ideal opportunity to reach the largest possible number of students with high-quality services" (Levitz & Noels, 1989, p. 98). If this strategy is not

feasible, then institutions can select faculty to teach who possess love and concern for others, the ability to create a positive learning environment, and commitment to teaching as a profession (Roueche & Roueche, 1985).

In other words, if institutions hired faculty who could demonstrate behaviors that they wish students to learn and retain, and display what they have learned, students would become more committed to the learning process (Jun & Tierney, 1999). The aforementioned professors with these qualities can promote student persistence. In turn, the positive learning environments that some professors have the potential to create, could offset the feelings of academic boredom and irrelevancy that motivate many students to drop out (Levitz & Noel, 1989).

#### Commuter Students and Campus Activities

The students who attend urban campuses who don't become academically bored, or who do see the relevance in their studies still tend to "seek education intermittently, transfer among institutions, and may take five or more years to complete their studies (Barnett & Phares, 1995). Studies by Chickering (1974) and Astin (1977) found that students living on campus were less likely than commuters to drop out and more likely to attain a baccalaureate degree in four years. As discussed earlier, many students who attend urban campuses commute to and from campus, work, and attend part-time (Davis, Karser, Hoover, & MacLean, 1995; and Lyton, 1995).

"No matter what commuter students' educational goals are, where they live, or what type of institution they attend, the fact that they commute to college has a profound influence on the nature of their educational experience. For residential students, home and campus are synonymous; for commuter students, the campus is a place to visit

sometimes for very short periods. Frequently, commuter students concentrate their classes into blocks and have little free time to spend on campus. By necessity, commuters select their campus involvement carefully" (Jacoby, 1989,p. 53).

Urban universities must not execute fragmented attempts to address the needs of students-as-commuters, but instead deploy long-range and comprehensive strategies (Jacoby, 1989). For example, the times that orientation and academic advising need to be conducted must fit the schedules and meet the needs of commuter students. In-classroom and extracurricular offerings should complement each other and steps should be taken to ensure those students understand the interrelationships between in-class learning and extracurricular activities (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). Failure to respond effectively and comprehensively to the needs and educational goals of the students who commute will make retaining this population impossible (Jacoby, 1995).

" In order for an urban university or college to properly address the needs of nontraditional student populations, and retain them accordingly, it must begin at the time of recruitment. Institutions of higher learning must review their mission statements and target their recruiting efforts on the type of student they are best equipped to serve in order to promote compatibility (Noel, 1985). Recruitment efforts should focus on the merits and resources offered by the university or college so that prospective students can make informed enrollment decisions. Tinto (1987) concluded that urban campuses should concentrate their efforts on orientation, and on programs that focus on the first year of student- life on campus, especially, but not exclusively on the first six weeks of the academic year (p. 13).



### The Importance of the First Year

Historically, students who attended urban colleges/universities often eventually transferred to a large public research university (Lynton, 1995). However, with the increase in college going students (Bryant, 1999), many students now find themselves place-bound and must rely on urban colleges/universities to provide them with opportunities to receive a higher education (Hathaway, Mulhollan, & White, 1995). The students who find their way to urban campuses create a diverse student population and the characteristics of many of the students contribute to the high attrition rate experienced at these campuses. In order to improve student persistence, the urban university has to help students make an academic, personal, and social adjustment to college (Astin, 1975; Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfle, 1986; and Tinto, 1987).

In an attempt to retain diverse student populations and counteract high rates of attrition, Cuseo (1991) suggested that institutions deliver support services to students early in their academic careers. Levitz and Noel (1989) determined that the most dependent learners were those at the point of entry into college and concluded that academic and student support services be concentrated most heavily in the freshmen year. Research represented by numerous studies have recommended that systems be created to help first-year students integrate into the social and academic systems of college (Astin 1975, 1977; Beal & Noel 1980; Cohen & Brawer 1970; Cope & Hannah 1975; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfle, 1986; Roueche & Roueche 1982; Tinto 1975; 1987).

The freshman year is a critical period during which students are most likely to withdraw from higher education (Tinto, 1987, Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, Blanc, Deburhr, & Martin, 1983; Noel, 1985). One half of all students who decide to drop out of college will do so during their freshman year (Noel, 1985; Terenzini, 1986), and, the

majority of students leaving will go during the first six to eight weeks of their beginning semester (Blanc, Debuhr, & Martin, 1983). Boyer (1987) claimed that many first year students find the transition from high school to college difficult and confusing. This transition can be more difficult if the campus environment is not designed to provide necessary support (Gardner 1986, Gordon & Grites 1984, Tinto 1987).

### The Freshman Success Course

The student population on most urban university campuses experience the highest attrition rates and are perfect candidates for participating in freshman success courses (Clewell & Ficklen 1987; Cope 1975; Pascarella & Chapman 1983). Although, freshman success courses vary in content offering however, they all have a common goal - increasing student integration and faculty involvement (Barefoot and Fidler, 1996). Studies by Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) and Tinto (1975) concluded that social and academic integration combined with faculty involvement help to reduce student dropout rates and improve student retention. Lastly, the 1991 National Survey (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992) indicated that freshman success courses are effective because they achieve their goal of helping students to increase their levels of student involvement and out-of class interaction with faculty. Academic achievement and student persistence were used to measure the increase in student involvement.

Upcraft and Gardner (1989) believed there were good programs at several colleges which addressed the concerns and the needs of first-time college students and that, the freshman success course was a very powerful way of enhancing freshman success (p 11). Freshman success courses combine seminar form (small class size and interactive pedagogy) and course content designed to ease the transition to college and prepare students for the expectations and demands of college life (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992).

Approximately two-thirds of the nation's college and university campuses have implemented freshman success courses to assist students with the transition into the college environment and to increase freshman persistence or 'success' as it is defined by each institution and each student (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992, p. 2).

There are many types of the freshman success courses. "The most common types were identified and described in the 1991 National Survey of Freshman Seminar Programming findings. They are as follows:

"Consistent with 1991 National Survey findings, the most common seminar types are the following:

1. **Extended orientation seminars.** Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival, or student success courses, these courses are taught by faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, graduate, and upper-level undergraduate students. Specific content varies widely but is likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life.
2. **Academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections.** These courses may be elective or required, inter-or extra-disciplinary in focus, and will sometimes be a part of the required general education core. These courses often focus on the 'higher order' academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument.
3. **Academic seminars on various topics.** In this type of seminar, each section will consider a different topic chosen by the faculty member who is the seminar instructor. These courses may evolve from any discipline. Students generally select their first- or second-choice seminar. In this genre, class size is often restricted to no more than 15 students.
4. **Professional or discipline-based seminars.** These seminars may be offered in any academic department or professional school (engineering, nursing, agriculture) and are designed to give students a basic introduction to the academic expectations and professional applications of the major.
5. **Basic study skills seminars.** These seminars provide some degree of remediation for students who are academically unprepared and focus on the

most basic study skills such as reading, dictionary use, note-taking, and basic writing” (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).

Fidler found that the positive significant relationship between participation in the University of South Carolina University 101 Freshman Seminar and freshman- to-sophomore retention was related to course ‘process’, that is, “University 101 participants are more likely than non-participants to achieve strong relationships with faculty...(and this) reflects greater social integration (cited by Barefoot and Fidler, 1996).

Many campuses have found that freshmen who completed these courses earned higher grade point averages and increased term-to-term persistence when compared to freshmen who did not enroll in the course (Gardner 1986; Gordon & Grites, 1984; Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Fidler and Fidler (1991) reported that one institution in offering a freshman success course showed sophomore return a rate of student return as a minimum of 76% (p. 26). Many urban campuses can successfully integrate new students into campus academic and social systems; respond to the needs of their diverse student populations; and counteract high attrition rates on their campuses by offering a freshmen success course' (Fidler 1991; Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Shanley & Witten, 1990).

Researchers have taken a comprehensive and integrated approach to research the impact of freshman success courses at four- year colleges and university (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Fidler & Fidler 1991). Earlier researchers studied the impact of freshman success courses to freshman at four-year institutions and produced statistically significant data on student academic persistence (Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Gardner, 1986; Gordon & Grites 1984; Stupka, 1993). Barefoot (1993) conducted research that has provided information on outcomes of freshman success courses. The outcome of the

research proved that such courses were effective in increasing grade point averages and persistence rates of students who had taken the course (Barefoot, 1993; Fidler 1991; Shanley & Witten 1990).

### Summary

The urban university or college has a challenge of educating a much less traditional and vastly more diverse student population. Students that enter these campuses are no longer drawn primarily from the usual 18-21-age cohort; higher education is sought increasingly by older students. Many are the first generation in their families to enter institutions of higher education. A large portion student population on the urban campus is place bound, because they work, have families, and as a result attend part-time in greater numbers, do not reside on-campus, and take more than four years to complete their degrees.

Combine the previous student characteristics with the fact that many students have been underprepared for higher education, find little relevance in their courses, have limited or unrealistic expectations of college, and lack clear academic and career goals; and it becomes very clear that urban campuses have to devise effective and comprehensive strategies to retain their students. Tinto (1987) suggested that these efforts not only focus on retaining students but also be committed to educating all students, faculty, and staff. Through this institutional commitment students will be integrated socially and intellectually within the social and academic structures of their campuses. Many researchers suggest that many urban campuses front - load their services and concentrate their efforts on the incoming new students. However, urban campuses must be careful to include the needs of all of their students when implementing retention efforts like orientation programs and academic advising. The urban campus

must also keep in mind that the majority of their students are commuter students, and require an effective faculty to help them make successful campus academic and social connections.

The freshman success course appears to be the type of program that the student population on an urban campus needs. It promises the new student, as well as those who have many of the characteristics and behaviors that lead to dropping out, an opportunity to have their individual needs addressed by attending a class. The freshman success course embodies a curriculum that teaches students values clarification, the benefits of an education, writing and study skills, as well as helps students decide on academic and career goals. Finally, various studies (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) have proven that the freshman success course successfully increases grade point averages and reduces attrition. Unfortunately, the available studies have not been conducted at non-selective or slightly selective four-year, urban, institutions. It is clear from this review of the literature that there is a pressing need to do so.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

“The greatest gift is not being afraid to question.” (Ruby Dee)

Many urban universities and colleges offer less rigorous admission criteria. As a result, many of these campuses are faced with retaining student populations that are non-traditional and academically underprepared. Although many campuses have implemented campus-based retention programs, they have unfortunately designed them using the experiences of traditional-age, full-time students at residential colleges as a guide (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). Thus, many urban universities and colleges need to create effective methods to retain an ever-increasing non-traditional student population or ‘new majority student’ (Kuh & Vesper, 1991; Pascarella and Champan, 1983; Tinto, 1987). The student populations that enroll at large, urban, less selective universities and colleges must be approached by academic and student affairs professionals in ways different from their traditional counterparts at residential colleges and universities (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). Yet, the new ‘approach’ used to retain non-traditional students must provide ways for successful social and academic integration into college life (Astin, 1984; Pace 1984; Tinto, 1988). Freshman success courses have been cited as possible tools to provide effective ways for urban universities to facilitate, to a not so captive audience, the integration of students into academic and social life of their campuses (Astin, 1993; Fidler, 1991; Tinto, 1988).

### Non-Traditional Students

Thus, two aspects of particular concern and focus in the present study were: 1) the particular type of freshman success courses being employed and 2) its impact on non-traditional students. A further discussion of these is in order. Many non-traditional students are attracted to urban universities and colleges because they are conveniently located, offer courses at convenient times, and have admission policies that are less selective than those found on more traditional residential college campuses (Lynton, 1995). The term 'non-traditional' is often used to describe their characteristics (Barnett & Phares, 1995; Smith, Gauld, & Tubbs, 1997). These students are typically over 23 years of age, ethnic minority, live off campus, have families, and are academically underprepared (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). Moreover, many of these students are the first in their families to attend a post-secondary institution and are likely to work and attend school part-time (Smith, Gauld, Tubbs, & Correnti, 1997). In the present study, non-traditional students are enrolled part-time, ethnic minority, 23 years of age or older, and/or have not declared a major.

These students tend to have the highest rates of attrition therefore, non-traditional student populations present a retention challenge for urban universities and colleges (Lynton, 1995; Tinto, 1985). In fact, some urban universities reported attrition rates as high as 65%. "At least one half of all students who drop out of college will do so during the first six to eight weeks of their beginning semester (Blanc, Debuhr, & Martin, 1983; Tinto, 1985). Tinto (1975) and Cuseo (1991) identified that most students drop out voluntarily and are heavily influenced by their campus academic and social experiences. Tinto (1975; 1987) proved that successful social and academic integration into campus



life increases student persistence. In addition, Tinto (1975; 1987) claims that universities and colleges have an obligation to do reasonable, but educationally sound things to retain the students they admit (Tinto, 1975).

The characteristics that typify non-traditional students affect the amount of time these students apply to academic tasks. However, evidence from research not only reveals that the amount of time students apply to academic tasks matters, but the environment created at urban universities can also have a significant impact on student success (Kuh & Vesper, 1991). In fact, “there is evidence indicating that institutional characteristics have as much or more impact on college withdrawal than do student characteristics and students are more likely to leave because of dissatisfying experiences with the institution they are attending (Noel, 1985).

#### Types of Freshman Seminars

Levitz and Noel (1989) contend that fostering student success in the first year is the most significant intervention an institution can make in the name of student persistence (p.65). This contention is supported by research indicating that freshman orientation programs, academic advising, peer and faculty mentoring, teacher effectiveness, and activities designed for commuter students promote student retention by integrating new students into the college community (Astin, 1975; Beal & Noel, 1980; Boylan, 1994; Crockett, 1985; Titley, 1985; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfe, 1986; Perigo & Upcraft, 1989). Freshman success courses claim to have integrated many of the retention methods, listed above, into their curriculums and help the persistence of first year students (Fidler, 1991; Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Stupka, 1986). There are many types of the freshman success courses.

“Consistent with 1991 National Survey findings, the most common types are the following:

1. **Extended Orientation Seminars.** Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival, or student success courses, these courses are taught by faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, graduate, and upper-level undergraduate students. Specific content varies widely but is likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life.
2. **Academic Seminars (with generally uniform academic content across sections).** These courses may be elective or required, inter-or extra-disciplinary in focus, and will sometimes be a part of the required general education core. These courses often focus on the 'higher order' academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument.
3. **Academic Seminars (on various topics).** In this type of seminar, each section will consider a different topic chosen by the faculty member who is the seminar instructor. These courses may evolve from any discipline. Students generally select their first- or second-choice seminar. In this genre, class size is often restricted to no more than 15 students.
4. **Professional or Discipline-Based Seminars.** These seminars may be offered in any academic department or professional school (engineering, nursing, agriculture) and are designed to give students a basic introduction to the academic expectations and professional applications of the major.
5. **Basic Study Skills Seminars.** These seminars provide some degree of remediation for students who are academically unprepared and focus on the most basic study skills such as reading, dictionary use, note-taking, and basic writing” (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).

Freshman success courses may vary from institution to institution. “However, a conceptual framework has been proposed for guiding decisions regarding the administrative delivery and course content of all freshman success courses. The proposed framework relies heavily on empirical evidence generated by college-level research in the areas of student retention, student learning and academic achievement, and student development” (Cuseo, 1991).

Cuseo (1991) offers the following seven recommendations for the administrative delivery of a freshman success course which encourages academic achievement and persistence. Institutions should:

1. offer the freshman success course for a full-semester.
2. conduct the freshman success course as a credit-earning course in which students receive grades affecting their GPA.
3. consider offering the freshman success course as a general study requirement.
4. offer multiple sections of the freshman success course to insure small class size.
5. involve college faculty in the freshman success course.
6. use the freshman success course as a mechanism for exposing beginning students to key support-service professionals.
7. involve upper-class students in the freshman success course as peer counselors or peer mentors.

“A survey of the literature also yielded recommendations for development of course content for freshman success courses, which have been associated empirically with positive student outcomes such as academic achievement and persistence. Using empirical evidence as the essential decision-making criterion, the following concepts were recommended as top priority topics for inclusion in the freshman success course” (Cuseo, 1991).

1. The Meaning, Value, and Expectations of Liberal Arts Education
2. Self-concept and Self-esteem

3. Problem Solving and Decision Making: Selection of a College Major and a Future Career
4. Goal Setting and Motivation
5. Learning Skills and Strategies: Learning How To Learn (i.e. note taking, strategies for reading comprehension, test-taking strategies, learning styles, library research strategies, etc.) Self-Management: Managing Time and Stress
6. Interpersonal Relations (i.e. verbal and non-verbal communication, active and empathetic listening skills, assertiveness, interracial and cross-cultural relations, etc.) (Cuseo, 1991).

Sound administrative delivery and course content of freshman success courses have proven to increase freshman to sophomore persistence rates, increase academic performance, of all students, and produce higher GPAs of course participants (Cuseo, 1991). Fidler found that data collected at the University of South Carolina indicates that students who have participated in a freshman success course have exhibited higher sophomore retention rates than non-participants for fourteen consecutive years (as cited in Cuseo, 1991). Similar retention-enhancing effects of the freshman success course have been found for 'high-risk' students who did not meet regular admission requirements, as found by Rice (cited in Fidler & Hunter, 1989). Fidler (1991) indicated that participation in a freshman success course raises the academic performance of low-achieving students (as identified by below-average SAT scores and high school rank) relative to that of students with more qualified admission characteristics (as cited in Cuseo, 1991).

“Finally, freshman success courses have also been found to produce statistically significant effects on academic achievement” (Cuseo, 1991, p. 3). GPA’s of course participants are significantly higher than those achieved by matched control groups of non-participants (Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Stupka, 1986; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989). Fidler and Hunter (1989) concluded that freshman success courses can help prepared students perform better academically while at the same time help weaker students survive” (p. 228).

### Statement of The Problem

This earlier research was not conducted at large, public, less selective urban colleges or universities. Therefore, what was not yet known was the relationship between participation in freshman success courses and persistence and academic performance at such institutions. In addressing this problem it would seem to be important to control for the individual variables of age, ethnicity, declaration of major, and full-time/part-time status of student since these variables are known to be associated with persistence and/or academic performance in general.

### Design of the Study

The present investigation was an exploratory/descriptive investigation of the differential effects of taking one or another type of freshman success course. It was an ex poste facto study since the data was retrieved from records of the participating institutions. It was intended to examine the affect that participation in a freshman success course had on subsequent student persistence and academic achievement. The study was also designed to identify the type of freshman success course offered at the WICHE institutions participating in the study. Data were analyzed through the application of descriptive and/or inferential statistical techniques and procedures.

The three WICHE Institutions that met the criteria to be classified as large, public, urban, less selective institutions were selected for participation in this study: Boise State University, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Boise State University declined to participate citing lack of staff time and resources. Several attempts to have them do so and/or secure the needed resources failed. Therefore, the latter two institutions comprised the study participants.

Both of these urban WICHE Institutions were asked to complete a survey instrument on demographics information and academic information on students who participated and on those who did not participate in a freshman success course offered during the Fall 2000 semester. In addition, the researcher provided a second survey instrument to program coordinators of each freshman success course. The researcher used responses on this survey instrument to classify each freshman success course in the study.

Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was used to determine if the freshman success courses in the study had any impact on persistence and academic achievement. This analysis was again used to determine if participating in the freshman success courses, found in the present study, had an impact on the academic achievement of non-traditional students and their persisting to the Fall 2001 semester.

### Subjects

The subjects of the study consisted of first-time non-transfer freshmen at Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The two freshman classes consisted of a population of 4,142 first semester freshmen that entered one or the other of the two institutions during the Fall Semester of 2000. These two freshman classes were targeted for selection because they met two important criteria. First, these students could elect whether or not to enroll in a freshman success course at their

respective institution. Second, longitudinal data could be accessed a year later that would reveal academic achievement levels and sophomore (second year) persistence rates for those same students.

Each of the two freshman classes was divided into two subgroups based on whether or not students participated in a freshman success course during their first semester (Fall Semester 2000). All subjects were followed through the beginning of the first term of their sophomore (second) year, Fall Semester 2001. Non-traditional students, from these freshman classes, were identified and formed an additional subset for study as well. Participants and non-participants were classified as non-traditional if they met any or all of the following:

- enrolled at part-time status,
- were ethnic minority (i.e. African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, or International),
- 23 years of age or older and/or
- had not declared a major.

These variables were chosen because research has identified these characteristics with being a non-traditional student (Kuh & Vesper, 1991; Pascarella and Champan, 1983; Tinto, 1987). Longitudinal data was used to determine whether or not non-traditional freshman success course participants' academic achievement levels and sophomore (second year) persistence rates differed from those non-traditional students who did not participate.

Institutions that belong to WICHE share data and participate in exchange programs for undergraduate study. Residents of all WICHE member states are eligible for such

exchange privileges. These states are Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1998). Boise State University, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are the only large, urban, less selective universities within WICHE that also subscribe to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities (Goven, 1999). Unfortunately, Boise State University was unable to provide the necessary resources to gather data for this study after repeated attempts to find a way to convince them to participate.

Metropolitan State College of Denver is among the largest public four-year colleges in the United States and is located in the heart of downtown Denver. The college offers major and minor fields of study, which focus on applied, career-directed education. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas is located on 335-acres near the central part of metropolitan Las Vegas and offers 180 undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs.

More specifically, the subjects of the study were 1,828 freshmen that entered Metropolitan State College of Denver and 2,314 freshmen that entered the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in Fall, 2000. They were first-time freshmen (non-transfers) at each institution. Each of the two freshman classes was divided into two subgroups based on whether or not students participated in a freshman success course during their first semester (Fall Semester 2000). Specifically, the first study population consisted of 189 first-time freshmen that enrolled in the "freshman success course" at Metropolitan State University and 1, 639 first-time freshmen who did not.



The second study population also consisted of two sub-groups. The first was comprised of 53 first-time freshmen that enrolled the freshman success course at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas and 2,261 first-time freshmen that did not participate in the freshman success course. Thus, each student in the entire study population met the requirement of being a first-time, non-transfer freshman. A subset of non-traditional students was identified from within each of the two study populations and was also divided into two groups based on participation or non-participation in a freshman success course at each respective institution. There were 146 non-traditional freshman that participated, in the freshman success course at Metropolitan State College of Denver, and 1, 172 that did not. Finally, 49 non-traditional freshman participated in the freshman success course at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and 1,263 non-traditional students that did not.

#### Instrumentation

Before the development of the instrumentation, certain parameters were established. First, the study was restricted to freshman to sophomore (second year) persistence. Second, data collection was limited to the cumulative GPAs and enrollment status at the time of Fall 2001 enrollment. These variables were selected because they were indicators of academic achievement and persistence. Third, inclusion was restricted to those variables for which data could be accessed and collected with reasonable ease.

The next step in the development of the instrumentation was the determination of which specific variables were critical to the study. In addition to GPA and enrollment status, background information that would be useful in demographic analyses was collected on each freshman. Moreover, a survey of the literature had indicated that there were five different types of freshman seminars commonly implemented. The literature

also provided recommendations for curriculum design and administrative delivery of the freshman seminar. These recommendations were considered in the design of the instruments.

Therefore, the researcher created two instruments. The first was labeled “Request for Student Data Memorandum” (see Appendix page 140). It was designed to gather data that would reveal whether students enrolled in a freshman success course achieved academically and persisted in greater numbers than those students who did not participate in a freshman success course. The second instrument was labeled “2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges (see Appendix page 144). This instrument was designed to gather information that would allow for the classification of the freshman success courses at the two universities. The first instrument, the Request for Student Data Memorandum, requested Fall 2000 data on the study populations. The second instrument, the 2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges, requested specific information on curriculum design and administrative delivery. The instrument facilitated easy but accurate classification of the type of freshman success course employed at each institution. A more detailed description of each instrument follows.

#### Request for Student Data Memorandum

A two-page Request for Student Data Memorandum was created (see Appendix page 140) to retrieve student information. The memorandum requesting student data explained the purpose and significance of the study and consisted of two parts. The first part was designed, to gather information on students who participated or did not participate in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester. The second part of the request

was intended to collect quantitative data on various segments of the total student populations found on the campuses of the colleges and universities that participated in this study. Finally, appropriate institutional officers at both the Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas were asked to gather and provide the student data needed to conduct this study.

The request for student data was designed, primarily, to gather academic achievement and persistence information on all first-time freshmen (non-transfers) students. Academic achievement and persistence information was gathered on students that had participated, as well as those that had not participated in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester. The request for student data was intended to gather cognitive and non-cognitive variables.

The cognitive variable was Fall 2001 GPA. Non-cognitive variables requested, and used in the study, were enrollment status (full-time/part-time), declaration of major (yes or no), gender (male or female), ethnicity (Caucasian, African American, Latino, Asian, Native American, Unknown, or Other), age, and Fall 2001 enrollment status. Fall 2001 semester GPA and Fall 2001 enrollment status were the variables used as indicators of academic achievement and freshman-to-sophomore (second year) persistence, respectively. The non-cognitive variables were chosen to provide background information and establish group differences. These variables were gathered on Fall 2000 freshman who participated or did not participate in a freshman success course. Together, the variables reported created an individual file for each student appearing in the study.

A second section of the Request for Student Data, consisted of fourteen (14) questions. The responses to these questions helped to determine institutional

characteristics and provide freshman or total enrollment data for the Fall 2000 and 2001 semesters. The majority of the responses to the questionnaire yielded quantitative data.

Questions one (1) through four (4) asked for name, city, state, and zip code of the reporting institution, as well as the name and title of the individual completing the questionnaire. The response to question five (5) indicated whether the reporting institution was classified as a 4-year public, 4-year private institution, or as something different. Questions six (6) asked for the institution's total undergraduate enrollment during the Fall 2000 semester. Question seven (7) requested the number of full-time and part-time undergraduates enrolled for the Fall 2000 semester. These figures were compared to the total enrollment and status of freshmen enrolled during the Fall 2000 semester. Questions eight (8) provided Fall 2000 freshman full-time and part-time enrollment data. Questions nine (9) through twelve (12) provided enrollment figures on students whom did or did not enroll in a freshman success course and on the first-time (non-transfer) population. Finally, question thirteen (13) requested Fall 2001 enrollment figures and question fourteen (14) asked the reporting institution to identify how the requested data would be secured. Specifically, question fourteen (14) was intended to identify the data gathering source (i.e. office of institutional analyses, or other). Combined, these two sections of the survey instrument were intended to produce data on the student populations included in the study.

#### 2000 – 2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges

The second instrument was designed to classify the type or types of freshman success courses that were being reported and to reveal more about their curriculum design and administrative delivery. The instrumentation designed to accomplish this was the 2000-

2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges. Five common seminar types had been identified in the survey of literature: Extended Orientation Seminars; Academic Seminars (with generally uniform academic content across sections); Academic Seminars (on various topics); Professional or Discipline-Based Seminars; and Basic Study Skills Seminars.

Moreover, the literature indicated specific recommendations for the administrative delivery and course content for the freshman success course, in order to encourage student achievement and persistence (Upcraft, Tinney & Garland, 1984). It had been argued that administrative delivery and course content can have decided impact on student persistence and academic achievement of students who participate in freshman success courses (Cuseo, 1991). Thus, this second survey instrument was designed to identify and thus allow the investigator to compare and contrast the administrative delivery and course content used by the two institutions in their respective offering of freshman success courses.

The 2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges (see Appendix page 143) consisted of four (4) pages and contained thirty-one (31) items, which tend to fall into the cognitive/affective area. The items themselves were revisions of those on the 1994 National Survey of Freshman Seminar Programs (Barefoot and Fidler, 1996). Items one (1) through eight provided information about the participating institution and the individual responsible for completing the survey. Items number nine (9) through ten (10) classified the type of freshman success course(s). Course content was determined by the responses to items eleven (11) to twelve (12). These questions helped to ascertain the goals of the course

and the primary topics taught, respectively. Questions thirteen (13) through thirty-one (31) identified the methods used to administer the delivery of the freshman success course.

The data provided by items thirteen (13) through nineteen (19) helped to determine class size, who provided instruction for the freshman success course, how the course was graded, and if instructors provided academic advising and were trained. Data collected by responses to items twenty-three (23) determined if the course was mandatory, and if so, for whom. Items twenty-four (24) through twenty-eight (28) yielded information concerning total classroom hours for the course, length of time required to complete the course, credit hours offered for the course, as well as whether the credits counted toward graduation. The response to item twenty-nine (29) determined whether the course was linked, clustered, or paired with other courses. Finally, item thirty (30) helped to establish the overall campus support, from student, faculty, staff, and administration for the freshman success course. The responses to the items varied from yes or no, to written responses. A panel of experts, comprised of the doctoral dissertation committee, examined both survey instruments. Applying expert judgment, they validated the instruments to be used in the study. This established content validity for the survey instruments.

#### Collection of Student Data

Thus, a dual-data collection process was developed. The first instrument, the Request for Student Data Memorandum, was designed to collect data on the population of students who did and did not enroll in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester. The aim of the second instrument, the 2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges, was to

gather data on the curriculum design and administrative delivery of the freshman success courses identified by the study.

The Director of Institutional Analysis & Planning at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas was the key officer there and, in addition, was very instrumental in helping to identify the necessary contact persons at the Metropolitan State College of Denver. She provided the telephone number for making contact there and lent her endorsement to the study as well. Thus, telephone communications were made to establish initial contact, explain the purpose of the research, and to secure the participation of both WICHE Institutions in the study. Subsequently follow-up exchanges were made via e-mail. Finally, the instruments were distributed by way of e-mail as well.

A prepared script, Institutional Analysis Contact/Research Contact – Interview Protocol, (see Appendix page 147) was used to introduce the researcher, explain the purpose of the study, and to secure participation of the two institutions. Therefore, data on the student population in this study was collected by forwarding the Request for Student Data Memorandum, by electronic mail (e-mail), to the Director of Institutional Research at Metropolitan State College of Denver; and Director of Institutional Analysis & Planning, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Both contact persons agreed to provide data for the study.

Data provided by collection of the first completed section of the survey the Request for Student Data Memorandum, was received from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas via e-mail, on October 4, 2002. The student data from Metropolitan State College of Denver were received, via e-mail, on October 10, 2002. Both institutions returned the first component of the request in the form of spreadsheets using Micro Soft Excel.

The second section of the Request for Student Data Memorandum, related to demographic data, was returned completed in its original form, via e-mail, by the Metropolitan State College of Denver (see Appendix page 148). The second section of the instrument was returned via facsimile (fax) from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (see Appendix page 150). Collectively, these data provided the researcher with the necessary information on the students who did or did not participate in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester.

In addition, the study required instrumentation that would help to classify the type of freshman success course offered at each of the WICHE Institutions participating in the study. The researcher searched the websites of the WICHE Institutions participating in the study, to identify the person responsible for administering their freshman success course. The websites provided the names of the administrators of the freshman success courses, their telephone numbers, and the title of the courses. It is important to point out that the administrators who completed the Request for Student Data Memorandum confirmed this information. The Director of the First Year Program at Metropolitan State University College of Denver and the Director of Student Development Center at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, Nevada were identified as the individuals responsible for administering the freshman success course at their respective institutions.

A prepared script, Freshman Seminar Program Contact Interview Protocol and Question, (see Appendix page 152) was developed to use in a telephone interview. The script helped the researcher guide the conversation, ensured continuity, and confirmed that the program contact would participate in the study by completing the survey. Both program contacts agreed to participate in the study. Per the telephone conversations, the



researcher forwarded a cover letter (see Appendix page 153) and a copy of the survey, (see Appendix page 143) via –e-mail, to each program contact on September 27, 2002.

On November 20, 2002, the Director of the Student Development Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas returned the survey (see Appendix page 154), via e-mail. A copy of a course curriculum outline and course syllabus (see Appendices pages 158 and 164) accompanied the survey. The Director of the First Year Program, at Metropolitan State College of Denver contacted the researcher, via telephone, on November 8, 2002, and indicated that she was scheduled for surgery and would not be able to return the survey until January 2003. Thus, these data were not received until January 25, 2003. A copy of the survey submitted by Metropolitan State College of Denver, as well as support materials, can be found in the Appendices pages 165 – 174.

### Research Questions

The major research questions investigated are listed below.

- Do participants in a Freshman Seminar course persist to sophomore year in greater proportions than non-participants do?
- Do participants in Freshman Seminar courses attain a higher GPA than non-participants by the end of the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?
- Do non-traditional students who participate in Freshman Seminar courses persist to sophomore year in greater proportions than non-traditional student non-participants do?
- Do non-traditional student participants in a freshman orientation course or seminar attain a higher GPA than non-traditional student non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?

### Analysis of Data

Once the data were collected, the researcher, through the application of appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques and procedures, conducted the appropriate analysis to address the research questions. MINITAB, computerized statistical software version 13, was utilized in the analysis of data collected. First, analysis was conducted to determine and to compare outcomes of both the participant and non-participant groups, on essential factors, using descriptive statistical procedures. The results were subjected to statistical treatment and reported in the form of frequency distributions and mean achievement levels and persistence for the participant and non-participant groups in the study. Please see Chapter 4 for a detailed examination of the data and findings. To analyze the data further, the researcher employed inferential statistical procedures in the form of a Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level. In the instances the inferential statistical procedures were applied a .05 level of significance ( $\alpha = .05$ ) was utilized. In addition, program data collected from the survey instrument were used to establish similarity of type and population of the participating institutions and to classify the institutional types of freshman success courses in the study.

After data was entered on a spreadsheet-using MINITAB, descriptive statistics were run to determine the mean, standard deviation, and various frequency counts. In addition, Two-Sample T-Tests applied at the 95% confidence level was employed to obtain whether a statistical significant difference could be realized between academic achievement and persistence, and participants and non-participants of a freshman success course. Academic achievement in this study was depicted by Fall 2001 GPA, and

persistence was determined by whether a participant/non-participant enrolled in the Fall 2001 semester.

A Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was also used to further analyze whether a statistically significant difference in persistence and academic achievement existed between non-traditional freshman who participated in a freshman success course, and non-traditional freshman who did not take the course during the Fall 2000 semester. In this instance the researcher wanted to describe the impact participating in a freshman success course had on freshman who were enrolled part-time, 23 years of age or older, had an undeclared major, and/or was classified an ethnic minority.

The criteria used in this study for examining student participants and non-participants at each institution were as follows:

- (1) The grade point average as measured by the average performance in all courses taken prior to the first semester of the sophomore (second) year, using a 4.0 grade point system – A earns 4 grade points per unit, B earns 3 grade points per unit, C earns 2 grade points per unit, D earns 1 grade point per unit, and F earns 0 grade points per unit. The letters I (incomplete) and W (withdrawal) grade notations are not computed in the grade point average.
- (2) The age of students.
- (3) Gender as indicated by (1) for male and (2) for female.
- (4) Part-time and Full-time enrollment status as indicated by (1) for part-time and (2) for full-time.
- (5) Ethnicity of students represented by (1) for Caucasian, (2) for African American, (3) for Latino, (4) for Asian, (5) for Native American, (6) for Foreign

National/International, (7) for Other.

(6) The Fall 2001 enrollment status indicated by a (1) for enrolled and (0) for not enrolled.

The program data collected from the survey instrument represented the characteristics of the freshman success courses which participated in the study with respect to goals, topics, and a variety of structural features, instruction, administration, longevity, and overall campus support. These data were used to compare similarity of type and population of Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Moreover, the data helped to classify and compare the type of freshman success course found at each institution according to course content and administrative delivery.

Both, Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are four-year public institutions with similar undergraduate populations in terms of size.

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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Table 1</u> Description of WICHE Urban Institutions</p>		
Name of Institutions	Type of Institution	Fall 2000 Undergraduate Enrollment
Metropolitan State College of Denver	Four-year Public	17,688
University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Four-year Public	22,342

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Both institutions admissions policy is open, however some programs have a selective admission policy. Although both Urban WICHE institutions participating in this study are similar in population size, criteria for admission, and both offer a freshman success course, it was not assumed that they were similar in any other way. Please see Tables 2

and 3 in Chapter 4 to examine the course content and administrative delivery used for each freshman success course found in the present study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chapter four presents the results and finding of the present study as they relate to an exploratory/descriptive investigation of the differential effects of taking one or another type of freshman success course. The study sought to determine whether or not participation in a freshman success course had a positive impact on student persistence and academic achievement. Secondly, the study was designed to classify and compare the freshman success courses included in this study by course content and administrative delivery. Responses to the survey instrument were used to collect data related to course content and administrative delivery. Finally, the aim of the study was to answer the following questions:

- Do participants in a freshman success course persist to the beginning of their sophomore (second) year in greater proportions than non-participants do?
- Do participants in freshman success courses attain a higher GPA than non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?
- Do non-traditional student participants in a freshman success course persist to the sophomore (second) year in greater proportions than non-traditional student non-participants do?

- Do non-traditional student participants in a freshman success course attain a higher GPA than non-traditional student non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?

Two-Sample T-Tests applied at the .05 level of significance were used to determine if participants in freshman success courses showed statistically significant persistence and academic achievement. The results are presented in three parts. Part I consist of the classification and comparison of the freshman success courses in the study, using the information submitted via the survey instrument. Part II presents descriptive statistics of the background data to provide a picture of the two samples used in this study. Part III provides research results and findings relative to the research questions.

#### Part I – Classification of Urban WICHE Freshman Seminar Courses

The data gathered from the 2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges were used to classify the freshman success courses in the study. Questions 1 – 8 provided the researcher with institutional characteristics. Both, Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are 4-year public institutions with an open admissions policy, however some programs have a selective admissions policy. Questions 9 – 30 provided information that allowed the researcher to classify the two freshman success courses and describe them according to recommended course content and administrative delivery. Table 2 located on page 87 contains data that classifies each freshman success course included in the present study, as well as outlines the course content for each. Located on page 96, Table 3 provides information that focuses on the administrative delivery of the freshman success courses. Finally, a description of the data provided by the Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas has been included.

Question 9 asked the program director/coordinator, at both participating institution, to identify the type of freshman success course(s) that exist on their campuses.

Metropolitan State College of Denver indicated that two types of freshman success courses were offered on their campus. One course is classified as an extended orientation seminar and the other as an academic seminar with generally uniform academic content across sections. Question 10 instructed institutions with multiple freshman success courses to provide program information only for the course with the highest enrollment. The academic seminar, referred to as the First Year Seminar (English 1190), was identified as having the highest enrollment. Therefore, the data provided in the present study, for Metropolitan State College of Denver, focused on the course content and administrative delivery of an academic seminar, the First Year Seminar (English 1190).

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas indicated that only one type of freshman success course is offered on their campus. It is classified as an extended orientation and is referred to as EPY 101. Therefore, the data provided in this research, for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, describes the course content and administrative delivery of EPY 101, and is classified as an extended orientation course.



<b>Table 2</b> <b>Classification of Urban WICHE Institutions</b> <b>Freshman Seminar Courses by Course Content</b>		
Fall 2000		
WICHE Institutions Which	Metropolitan State College Of Denver First Year Seminar (English. 1190)	University of Nevada, Las Vegas EPY 101
<b>Offer a Freshman Seminar</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Classify seminar type as</b>		
Extended orientation	Yes	Yes
Academic (common content)		Yes
Academic (variable content)		
Basic Study Skills		
Other		
<b>Report the goals for seminar</b>		
Develop Essential Academic Skills	Yes	Yes
Provide Orientation to Campus	Yes	Yes
Ease Transition to Campus	Yes	Yes
Provide Support through Resources/Support Services	Yes	Yes
<b>Common Curriculum Topics</b>		
Expectations of Higher Ed.	Yes	Yes
Time Management		Yes
Study Skills		Yes
Major/Career Planning		Yes
Goal Setting		Yes
The American Dream	Yes	
The Myth of the Am. Family	Yes	
Gender, Racial Myths	Yes	

#### Goals of the Freshman Seminar Courses

Responses to question 11 helped to identify the three primary objectives for the freshman success courses. The course objectives listed for the First Year Seminar (English 1190) are congruent with the course content description of academic seminars found in the literature. "The literature claims that academic seminars focus on the

‘higher order’ academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument” (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). An abbreviated list of course objectives for the First Year Seminar (English 1190) can be found in Table 2 on page 87. In addition, Metropolitan State College of Denver submitted a detailed course outline with their return of the survey instrument and specific (measurable) student behavioral learning objectives’ for the First Year Seminar (English 1190) were given for the seminar (see Appendix pages 169 - 174). The course objectives state that upon completion of the seminar students will be able to:

1. Use critical thinking in order to write clear, honest papers in reaction to readings and discussions;
2. Apply critical reading techniques, analyzing meaning;
3. Record carefully, gathering details;
4. Locate information, data, sources, from the library and the internet;
5. Prepare and write papers incorporating research as substantiation for personal viewpoints;
6. Apply decision making skills based upon adequate information;
7. Practice group consensus;
8. Operate actively, effectively and cooperatively in groups;
9. Value, gain awareness and respect for other cultures;
10. Assess, and solve problems;
11. Identify and clarify values;
12. Recognize and become involved with and integrated into the college classroom and campus.

Thus, the course goals listed for the First Year Seminar (English 1190) are congruent with the description of an academic seminar designed for freshman provided by the literature (Barefoot & Fiddler, 1996).

A course syllabus was also submitted with the survey instrument for EPY 101, which is the extended orientation course offered by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (see Appendix page 161). Barefoot and Fiddler (1996) claimed that the content of extended orientation courses varied but was likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life (p.2). The survey that was returned by the Director of EPY 101 directed the researcher to the syllabus for EPY 101 to determine the goals of the course. The mission of EPY 101 is to teach students to take initiative and be responsible for their growth and success at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The EPY 101 syllabus lists the course objectives as follows:

- To prepare students for meetings with faculty/advisors and understand rationale and requirements of the core curriculum and the qualities of an educated person.
- To help students learn about campus resources, services, and opportunities available, in an effort to promote academic and personal growth.
- To identify and improve student skills and competencies as they relate to academic, personal, and career goals.
- To increase the retention-rate for students and create a satisfying experience.

Thus, the EPY 101 course objectives were congruent with the classification of extended orientation courses found in the literature (Barefoot & Fiddler, 1996).

#### Course Content of the Freshman Success Courses

The differences between an academic seminar (First Year Seminar – English 1190) and an extended orientation seminar (EPY 101) were further emphasized in the responses to Questions 12 of the survey instrument, and in the detailed course outline and syllabus, submitted. Question 12 asked respondents to list the most important topics that comprise the content of the freshman success course. Each freshman success course, in the present study, provided students with documents that outlined course content. As stated earlier, a detailed outline of course content and syllabus was provided for both the First Year Seminar (English 1190) and EPY 101. Assigned readings, written assignments, and class discussions and activities were required by both courses. However, the First Year Seminar (English 1190), the academic seminar, according to its syllabus, placed a greater emphasis on developing critical thinking and writing skills. In addition, according to the course outline provided, the methods employed to help students develop those skills, as outlined in the syllabus, were similar to the methods employed by EPY 101.

The most important topics that comprise the content of the First Year Seminar (English 1190) are:

1. The American Dream
2. The Myth of the American Family
3. Higher Education
4. Gender, Racial Myths

Further perusal of the syllabus clarified the topics as:

1. Money and Success: The Myth of Individual Opportunity, the definitions of the American Dream and the value of it.
2. Harmony at Home: The Myth of the Model Family, the forms and functions of the family, dysfunction.
3. Learning Power: The Myth of Education and Empowerment, American systems of education; how one is educated; how does one recognize good education?
4. Created Equal: The Myth of the Melting Pot, Definitions of Discrimination, Prejudice, Racism, Stereotyping, and Multiculturalism.
5. True Women and Real Men: Myths of Gender, Gender as a cultural invention, gender roles and stereotyping.
6. Westward Ho! The Myth of Frontier Freedom, The concept of freedom.

The methods utilized to encourage critical thinking and writing, per the syllabus, are class discussions, reading and written assignments, and activities. All of the discussions are based on topics taken from the required text for the seminar, Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (see syllabus Appendix page 171). The activities included journal writing, group exercises, guest speakers, and an introduction to the library and establishing and computer accounts. The First Year Seminar (English 1190) integrated culture across the curriculum to teach critical thinking and writing skills.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas indicated that EPY 101 has a common curriculum across sections and the most important topics listed for the extended seminar are:

1. Time Management

2. Study Skills
3. Major/Career Planning
4. Goal Setting

Examination of the syllabus submitted for EPY 101 further defined the topics as:

1. Introduction to the course; review of the syllabus
2. What is an Educated Person? Values Clarification; Motivation and Goal Setting
3. Multiple Intelligence; Your Learning Styles; Personality Typing
4. Critical and Creative Thinking; Time Management
5. Priorities; Procrastination; Listening Skills
6. Note-taking; Study Skills
7. Test Taking Skills; Academic Advising & Policies/Grade Point Averages; Making Faculty Connections
8. Writing Skills & Public Speaking
9. Writing Center Tour
10. Relationships; Personal Responsibility (Health)
11. Diversity I; Diversity II
12. Personal Wellness; Assertiveness; Stress Management; Conflict Resolution
13. Career Development; Life Planning
14. Getting Involved on Campus; Preparing for Spring Semester
15. Final Exam

The methods used to encourage the development of academic skills, per the EPY 101 syllabus, were class discussions, reading and written assignments, and class activities.

Also, students were provided library and writing lab tours, and given the opportunity to make faculty connections. The academic skill building exercises were assigned from the required text for the seminar, Cornerstone: Building On Your Best – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (see syllabus Appendix page 161). EPY 101 focuses on providing students with the opportunity to learn basic survival skills such as goal setting, discovering a sense of self, becoming familiar with campus resources and making faculty connections. The courses differ in the subject matter covered and in emphasis placed on the methods used to reinforce learning. The First Year Seminar (English 1190) places more emphasis on writing while EPY 101 uses a ‘workbook’ method to support learning. Although different, this study does not suggest that one method is better than the other.

#### Administrative Delivery of the Freshman Success Courses

Questions 13 – 30 provided information concerning the administrative delivery of the freshman success courses included in the present study. The responses are in Table 3, located on page 96 and are presented here in summary form. The administrative delivery of the course includes information about course longevity, course offerings, enrollment, course value, level of instruction and instructor training, as well as the degree of campus support.

The First Year Seminar (English 1190) is in its nineteenth year, as of 2003, on the campus of Metropolitan State College of Denver. There were multiple sections of the seminar offered during the Fall 2000 semester. Sometimes academically underprepared students are required to enroll, and currently there is an academic seminar designed especially for honor students. Students enroll in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) for one semester, receive 45 semester hours of instruction, and receive three (3) credit

hours toward general education requirements. In the past, some offerings of the seminar were linked or clustered with other courses, but currently it is not.

Faculty/adjunct faculty, student affairs professionals, and other campus administrators provide instruction for the First Year Seminar (English 1190). One day of training is offered and required of all instructors. The program administrator indicated that support from students, faculty, staff, and administration is considered very high. This rating was defined on a scale from (1) to (5) with (1) being the lowest rank (see Appendix page 168).

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas has administered the EPY 101 course for fourteen years on its campus. There were two sections of the course offered in the Fall 2000 semester. However, students are not required to enroll in EPY 101, nor are any sections offered specifically for any unique sub-populations of students (i.e. adults, ethnic minorities, athletes, etc.). Students enroll in EPY 101 for one semester, receive 32 hours of instruction, and receive two (2) credit hours toward satisfying their electives, upon successful completion of the course. EPY 101 is not linked or clustered with any other course(s).

Student affairs professionals teach the course. Instructor training is provided, but not required, for instructors of EPY 101. During three separate meeting days six hours of training is offered. Although the course has been offered for fourteen years on the campus, the program administrator indicated that support for EPY 101 from students, faculty, staff, and administrators is low. This rating was defined on a scale from (1) to (5) with (1) being the lowest rank (see Appendix page 157).

Both courses are offered for three (3) credits and participants' grades can affect their grade point average (GPA). However, the First Year Seminar (English 1190) requires 45



semester hours of sent time, while EPY 101 requires 32 hours. In addition, Metropolitan State College of Denver classifies the First Year Seminar (English 1190) as a general studies offering and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas classifies EPY 101 as an elective. Finally, the level of support from students, faculty, and administrators differed considerably.

<u>Table 3</u> Classification of Urban WICHE Institutions Freshman Seminar Courses by Administrative Delivery		
	Fall 2000	
	Metropolitan State College Of Denver	University of Nevada Las Vegas
Limit Seminar size to 25 students	Yes	Yes
Grade Seminar with letter grade	Yes	Yes
Require seminar of all freshman	None	None
Offer academic credit for seminar	Yes	Yes
Offer seminar for one semester	Yes	Yes
Apply seminar credits as		
Core requirement		
General Education	Yes	
Elective		Yes
Major Requirement		
Other		
Provide seminar instruction using		
Faculty	Yes	
Student Affairs Professionals	Yes	Yes
Other Campus Administrators	Yes	
Undergraduate Students		
Graduate Students		
Other		
Seminar instructors advise students	No	No
Offer Training for Instructors	Yes	Yes
Require Training for Instructors	Yes	No
Report Longevity as		
2 years or less		
5 years or less		
10 years or less		
10 years or more	Yes	Yes
Report Institutional Support as		
High	Yes (5)	Yes (2)
Low		

## Part II – Description of the Participants

The participants in the current study were 4,142 first-time freshman from Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas during the Fall of 2000. Both of the freshman classes were divided into two subgroups based on whether or not students participated in a freshman success course during their first semester (Fall Semester 2000). The subgroups at Metropolitan State College of Denver consisted of 189 participants and 1,639 non-participants. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas subgroups included 53 participants and 2,261 non-participants. This section describes the participants by gender, ethnicity, and age of participants and non-participants by institutions (see Tables 4 -7).

### Metropolitan State College of Denver, Participants by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Table 4, page 98 provides gender, ethnic, and age demographic information on freshman who participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) and Table 5, page 100 provides similar information for students who did not participate. The 107 Female students who participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) made up 57% of the total participant sample. There were 82 male participants and they comprised 43% of the participant sample.

The ethnic sub-groups included in the participant sample included 47% Caucasians and 30.5% Latinos. However, the participant percentages of African Americans, Asians, International Students, and American Indian were much lower at 11%, 5.8%, 1.0% and 0.5% respectively.

Table 4  
Metropolitan State College of Denver – Participants  
First Year Seminar (English 1190)  
by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Variables		Number	Percent	Mean	2000 Freshmen Totals	2000 Freshmen Percentages
Gender:	Male	82	43.0%	0.634	887	3.0%
	Female	107	57.0	0.523	941	6.0
Ethnicity	Af. Am.	20	11.0 %	0.650	111	1.0
	Am. In.	1	0.5	1.0000	15	-
	Asian	11	5.8	0.636	64	0.3
	Cauc.	89	47.0	0.5843	1213	5.0
	Latino	58	30.5	0.5172	303	3.2
	Inter'l	2	1.0	1.0000	14	-
	Other	8	4.2	0.429	108	0.4
Age	15-19	162	88.0	0.592	1367	8.9
	20-25	23	11.0	0.391	345	1.0
	26-30	1	0.3	1.0000	53	-
	31-35	1	0.3	1.0000	34	-
	36-40	2	0.4	0.500	18	0.1
	41-51					

Note. Dashes indicate numerical data too low to be significant.

The 15-19 year old age sub-group was 88% of the total freshman class. Those who were 20-25 represented 12% of participants. The enrollment totals for students who were 26-30 and 31-35 age group were very low. Only one student from both the 26 – 30 and 31-35 age ranges and two from 36-40 age range enrolled in the First Year Seminar (English 1190).

Metropolitan State College of Denver, Non- Participants by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Table 5, page 100 describes the non-participant sub-group by gender, ethnicity, and age. Little difference existed between the percentages of male and female students who did not participate in The First Year Seminar (English 1190). In fact, 805 male non-

participants comprised 48% of the non-participant sub-group, and 834 females constituted 51% of the sub-group. Here again, Caucasians represented the largest population with 69% or 1,124 students. Latinos, the second largest population, represented 15% or 245 members of the non-participant sub-group. The remaining ethnic groups were represented at significantly lower percentages: African Americans 5.7%, Asians 3.2%, American Indians 0.9%, and International students 0.7%.

The largest student representation, in terms of age, of the non-participants were 15-19 year olds at 71% and 20-25 year olds at 20.5%. The 26-30 year olds and 31-35 year olds represented 4% and 3% of the non-participants respectively. Older students age 36-40 and 41-51 comprised 1.4% of the total non-participants.

There was no significant difference between the percentage of male and female participants and non-participants. Males represented 43% of the participants and 49% of the non-participants. Females represented 57% of participants and 51% of non-participants. Ethnic minorities, with the exception of American Indians, who participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) were represented in higher percentages, than ethnic minority non-participants.

In addition, Latinos, African Americans, Asians and International student participants represented a significant proportion of their total demographic, in the freshman class, at 19%, 18%, 17% and 14% respectively when compared to Caucasians. Specifically, there was a total population of 303 Latinos and 19% participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190). The African Americans participants totaled 111, or 18%, and 17% of the 64 Asian freshman participated as well. Finally, there were 14 International students, in the freshman class, and 14% participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190).

Both participants and non-participants were comprised of a disproportionately high number of 15-19 year olds when compared to other represented age groups. The 15-19 year olds represented 88% of the participants and 71% of the non-participants. The 20-25 year old participants represented only 7% of their total demographic, and students 26 years of age and older had significantly low to no participants in the First Year Seminar (English 1190).

**Table 5**  
Metropolitan State College of Denver – Non-Participants  
First Year Seminar (English 1190)  
by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Variables		Number	Percent	Mean	2000 Freshmen Totals	2000 Freshmen Percentages
Gender:	Male	805	49.0 %	0.5565	887	47.0%
	Female	834	51.0	0.5695	941	44.0
Ethnicity	Af. Am.	91	5.7	0.5385	111	5.0
	Am. In.	14	0.9	0.5000	15	0.7
	Asian	53	3.2	0.5660	64	3.0
	Cauc.	1124	69.0	0.5653	1213	62.0
	Latino	245	15.0	0.5633	303	13.0
	Inter'l	12	0.7	0.8330	14	0.4
	Other	100	5.5	0.5200	108	6.0
Age	15-19	1205	71.0	0.4745	1367	66.0
	20-25	322	20.5	0.4617	345	18.0
	26-30	52	4.0	0.2918	53	2.8
	31-35	33	3.0	0.4196	34	1.8
	36-40	16	0.9	0.4532	18	0.8
	41-51	11	0.6	0.4285	11	0.6

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Participants by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Table 6, below describes the University of Nevada, Las Vegas EPY 101 participants by gender, ethnicity, and age. There were 29 female participants and 24 male participants; thus, there was a 5% difference between the number of males and female participants. The participants with the largest ethnic representation were Caucasians at 51% and Asians at 26%. Latinos carried the third largest percentage with 11%. African Americans comprised 4% of the participants, and there were no American Indian nor International student participation in EPY 101, during the Fall 2000 semester. In addition, the entire EPY 101 participant group was comprised of students 15-19 years of age.

Table 6 University of Nevada, Las Vegas-Participants EPY 101 by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age						
Variables		Number	Percent	Mean	2000 Freshmen Totals	2000 Freshmen Percentages
Gender:	Male	24	45.0 %	0.7931	1024	1.0%
	Female	29	55.0	0.7500	1290	1.0
Ethnicity	Af. Am.	4	8.0	0.0000	196	-
	Am. In.	-	-	-	33	-
	Asian	14	26.0	0.8571	356	0.5
	Cauc.	27	51.0	1.7778	1333	1.0
	Latino	6	11.0	1.0000	248	0.2
	Inter'l	-	-	-	37	-
	Other	2	4.0	1.0000	111	-
Age	15-19	53	100.0	0.7669	2232	2.3
	20-25	-	-	-	-	-
	26-30	-	-	-	-	-
	31-35	-	-	-	-	-
	36-40	-	-	-	-	-
	41-51	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Dashes indicate non-student enrollment or data too low for significance.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Non-Participants by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Table 7, page 103, describes those students who elected not to participate in EPY 101 by gender, ethnicity and age. The non-participant sub-group was consistent with the participant male to female percentages. A total of 1,261 female represented 56% of the non-participant group while 1,000 males were 44% of non-participants.

Non-participants identified as Caucasian totaled 1,306 and comprised 58% of the group, and 342 Asians represented the largest number of ethnic minority non-participants and were 15% of the sub-group. There were 242 Latinos and 192 African Americans, which represented 11% and 8.5% of the group respectively. Finally, the number of non-participants that were identified as American Indian and International students represented 1.0% and 1.5% of the sub-group respectively.

The majority of the non-participants were 15 – 19 years of age. Their numbers totaled 2,179 and represented 97% of the sub-group. Those 20-25 years of age were the second largest group with 75 students and represented 39% of the non-participants. The 26-51 year olds yielded no significant percentages with a total population of seven students.

There was no significant difference in the percentages of male and female participants and non-participants. However, Caucasians and Asians represented significant percentages in the participant sub-group, but they only represented 2% and 4%, respectively, of their total demographic. In addition, Latinos reflected 11% of the participant group, and African Americans represented 8%. Yet, both Latinos and African American participant translated into low representation, 2%, of their total demographic.

Finally, 15-19 year olds represented the majority of the first semester freshman class, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This representation was reflected in both the



participant and non-participant subgroups. In addition, there were 82, 20-51 year olds enrolled as first semester freshmen, during the Fall 2000 semester, and no one from this age range participated in EPY 101.

Table 7  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas - Non-Participants  
EPY 101  
by Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

Variables		Number	Percent	Mean	2000 Freshmen Totals	2000 Freshmen Percentages
Gender:	Male	1000	44.0 %	0.6931	1024	43.0%
	Female	1261	56.0	0.6840	1290	55.0
Ethnicity	Af. Am.	192	8.5	0.6198	196	8.0
	Am. In.	33	1.0	0.6364	33	1.5
	Asian	342	15.0	0.7690	356	15.5
	Cauc.	1306	58.0	0.6815	1333	56.0
	Latino	242	11.0	0.6942	248	0.2
	Inter'l	37	1.5	0.7027	37	1.8
	Other	109	5.0	0.6514	111	5.0
Age	15-19	2179	97.0	0.7759	2232	94.2
	20-25	75	3.0	0.5600	75	3.2
	26-30	4	-	0.5000	4	0.2
	31-35	2	-	0.5000	2	0.07
	36-40	0	-	-	-	-
	41-51	1	-	1.0000	1	0.03

Note. Dashes indicate non-student enrollment or data too low for significance.

### Part III – Responses to Research Questions

In response to the following questions the researcher utilized data forwarded by the offices of Institutional Research and Institutional Analysis and Planning from the Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas respectively. As mentioned, the following discussion addresses the analysis of the data gathered and is organized to answer each of the research questions in the present study.

Research Question #1:

Do participants in a freshman success course persist to the beginning of their sophomore (second) year in greater proportions than non-participants do?

A Two-Sample T-Test was run at a confidence interval of 95% to determine if participants of the First Year Seminar (English 1190), during the Fall 2000 semester, persisted to the Fall 2001 semester in greater number than non-participants at Metropolitan State College of Denver. The statistical results are displayed in Table 8 below.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Table 8</u> Persistence to Fall 2001 Semester of Participants and Non-Participants at Metropolitan State College of Denver</p>				
Success = 1				
Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	923	0.563	0.496	0.012
Participant (1)	108	0.571	0.496	0.036
Estimate for p (0) – p(1): -0.00831				
95% CI for p (0) - p(1): (-0.0834, 0.0668)				
Test for p(0) - p(1) = 0 (vs not = 0): Z = -0.22 P-Value = 0.828*				
<u>Note.</u> *p > .05				

The results of the test revealed a p-value >0.5, where p = 0.828. Although participants persisted at a slightly higher rate, there was no statistically significant difference in the persistence of participants and non-participants to the Fall 2001 semester.

A Two-Sample T-Test and Confidence Interval was also run to reveal if participants of the EPY 101 extended orientation course, during the Fall 2000 semester, persisted to

the Fall 2001 semester in greater numbers than non-participants. The statistical results are displayed in Table 9 on page below.

<p align="center"><u>Table 9</u> Persistence to Fall 2001 Semester of Participants and Non-Participants at University of Nevada, Las Vegas</p>				
Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	1558	0.689	0.463	0.0097
Participant (1)	41	0.774	0.423	0.058
Estimate for p (0) - p (1): -0.0845				
95% CI for p (0) - p (1): (-0.2104, 0.0414)				
Test for p (0) - p (1) = 0 (vs not = 0): Z = -1.32 P-Value = 0.188*				
<u>Note.</u> *p> .05				

The upper limit of the CI of difference in two proportions is barely to the right of zero; thus, the results indicate that participants enroll at a slightly higher rate than non-participants do. However, the p-value for the Two Sample T-Test is 0.188 > 0.05. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference in the persistence of participants and non-participants to the Fall 2001 semester at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

The rates of persistence of participants versus non-participants at the Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, are shown in the chart below.

	Participants		Non-Participants	
Metropolitan State College of Denver	108/189	57%	923/1,639	56%
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas	41/53	77%	1,558/2,261	69%

The First Year Seminar (English 1190), at the Metropolitan State College of Denver had 189 participants, 108 participants persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. Non-participants totaled 1,639 and 923 non-participants persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. The EPY 101 course, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, had a total enrollment of 53, first semester freshman, 41 of the participants persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. The non-participant sub-group totaled 2,261 and 1,558 persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. Since there was no statistically significant difference resulting from the comparisons, the slightly higher persistence rate of participants, in both the First Year Seminar (English 1190) and EPY 101, could not be attributed to enrolling in either of the freshman success courses.

Research Question #2:

Do participants in freshman success courses attain a higher GPA than non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?

A Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was run to determine if participants in the Metropolitan State College of Denver First Year Seminar (English 1190) attained higher grade point averages, at the beginning of the Fall 2001 semester, than students who did not participate in the course. Only the records of participants and non-participants who persisted to the Fall 2001 semester were analyzed to determine means and standard deviations of GPA. Table 10, on page 107 contains the results of the tests. The p-value is  $> .05$  at 0.416. Therefore, the results of the test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in GPA of participants and that of non-participants.

Table 10  
Comparison of GPA's  
of Metropolitan State College of Denver  
Participants and Non-Participants

Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	923	2.623	0.832	0.027
Participant (1)	108	2.568	0.631	0.061
Difference = $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$				
Estimate for difference: 0.0543				
95% CI for $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$ : (-0.0772, 0.1859)				
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs not = 0): T = 0.82 P-Value = 0.416*				

Note. \*p > .05

A Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was also used to analyze the University of Nevada, Las Vegas participant and non-participant subgroups. Specifically, the test was used to reveal if participants, who persisted to the Fall 2001 semester, of the EPY 101 attained higher grade point averages, than non-participant persisters. Table 11, can be found on page 108, and it contains the results of the tests. There was no statistically significant difference since p-value is >.05 at 0.223. Thus, the results of the test indicated that there was no significant difference between the GPAs of participants and non-participants.

**Table 11**  
**Comparison of the GPA's**  
**of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
**Participants and Non-Participants**

Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	1558	2.809	0.618	0.016
Participant (1)	41	2.690	0.674	0.11

Difference =  $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$

Estimate for difference: 0.1195

95% CI for difference: (-0.0728, 0.3117)

T-Test of difference = 0 (vs not =): T-Value = 1.22 P-Value = 0.223\*

Note. \*p > .05

The differences in GPAs of participants and non-participants, at the Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are depicted in the chart below. The First Year Seminar (English 1190), at Metropolitan State College of Denver, had 108, of 189, participants persist to the Fall 2001 semester.

Fall 2001 Grade Point Averages of Persisters	Participants	Non-Participants
Metropolitan State College of Denver		
N	108	923
Mean	2.57	2.62
Standard Deviation	0.631	0.832
University of Nevada, Las Vegas		
N	41	1558
Mean	2.70	2.81
Standard Deviation	0.674	0.618

The mean GPA of participants was 2.568, only .04 less than the non-participant mean GPA. Non-participants who persisted totaled 923 and their mean GPA was 2.62 during the Fall 2001. Non-participants at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas mean average GPA, for the Fall 2001 semester, was 2.81. This GPA mean was .11 higher than that of

participants. The mean average GPA of participants was 2.70. However, there was no statistically significant difference in GPAs between participants and non-participants at either WICHE urban institution.

Research Question #3:

Do non-traditional student participants in freshman success courses persist to the sophomore (second) year in greater proportions than non-traditional student non-participants do?

Before inferential statistics could be applied to reveal whether or not non-traditional student participants persisted to the sophomore year in greater proportions than non-traditional students did, non-traditional students had to be identified, and sub-sets created of their records. The definition of a non-traditional student for this study was any student who had not declared a major, was 23 years old or older, enrolled part-time, and/or is an ethnic minority. The sub-sets that were generated, using the available data, from both freshman classes, were non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants. Thus, these new sub-sets consisted of students who were 23 years old or older, were enrolled part-time and had not declared a major during the Fall 2000 semester, and/or are ethnic minority.

Metropolitan State College of Denver

To determine if non-traditional participants persisted at higher rates than non-traditional students who did not participate in the First Year Seminar, a Two-Sample T-Test was applied at the 95% confidence level. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 12, located on page 110.

Table 12  
Comparison of Persistence to Fall 2001 Semester  
of Non-Traditional Participants and Non-Participants  
at Metropolitan State College of Denver

Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	645	0.550	0.498	0.015
Participant (1)	83	0.568	0.497	0.041

Difference =  $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$

Estimate for difference: -0.0182

95% CI for difference: (-0.1042, 0.0679)

T-Test of difference = 0 (vs not =): T-Value = -0.42 P-Value = 0.678\*

Note. \*p > .05

There was no statistically significant difference in the persistence of non-traditional participants and that of non-traditional non-participants as shown by a p-value = 0.678.

The chart below displays the persistence rate of the non-traditional freshmen, found in the current study, during the Fall 2000 semester at Metropolitan State College of Denver.

Metropolitan State College of Denver	Persisters	Non-Persisters	Total	Percentage
Non-Traditional Participants	83	63	146/189	57%
Non-Traditional Non-Participants	645	527	1172/1639	55%

p = 0.678



Out of the 189 participants 146 were non-traditional students and 83 persisted to their second year. Thus, 57% of participants persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. There were 1,172 non-traditional freshmen that did not participate in the First Year Seminar (English 1190). Non-traditional, non-participants that persisted to the Fall 2001 semester equaled 645, and 527 did not persist. Therefore, 55% of the non-traditional non-participants persisted to their second year.

Although there was no statistically significant difference in the persistence means of non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants at Metropolitan State College of Denver, a discussion concerning the persistence of the individual dimensions that define non-traditional freshman seems fitting. Non-traditional freshmen, included in this study, had one or more non-traditional qualifiers or dimensions (i.e. part-time enrollment status, undeclared major, ethnic minority, and/or 23 years old or older). Specifically, the following discussion focuses on the persistence of freshman, included in this study, which were classified as part-time, undeclared majors, ethnic minority, and/or 23 years of age or older and attended the Metropolitan State College of Denver during the Fall 2000 semester.

#### Part-time Enrollment and Persistence

The persistence rates of those students who were enrolled part-time and thus, met at least one of the qualifications for non-traditional student classification are listed in the chart on page 112. There were 146 non-traditional students who participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190), and 19 of them were enrolled on a part-time basis. Of the 19 non-traditional student participants 9, or 47%, persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

Persistence of Part-time Non-Traditional Metropolitan State College of Denver Students	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
Participants	19	0.474	9	47%
Non-Participants	445	0.4427	197	61%

Non-participants who qualified for non-traditional classification were 1,172 in number, and 445 of those students were enrolled on a part-time basis during the Fall 2000 semester. Out of the 445 part-time non-traditional students, who did not participate in the First Year Seminar, 197 or 44% persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

#### Undeclared Major and Persistence

Freshmen who had not declared a major during the Fall 2000 semester were also classified as non-traditional students. A description of both sub-sets is found in the chart below.

Persistence of Undeclared Majors who were Non-Traditional Students	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
Participants	83	0.5542	50	60%
Non-Participants	741	0.5857	434	59%

There were a total of 83 students who participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) who had not declared a major during the Fall 2000 semester. Of those students, 50 or 60 % persisted to their second year, or the Fall 2001 semester. Non-participants, who had not declared a major, totaled 741 and 434 or 59% persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

### Ethnicity and Persistence

Ethnic minorities, African American, American Indian, Asian, Latino, or International students, were also classified as non-traditional freshmen. A description of the persistence to the Fall 2001 semester of those ethnic minority freshmen that participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) can be seen in the chart below. African Americans who participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) persisted at 65% and 52% of the Latino that participated persisted. The students classified as American Indian and International students who participated all persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

Persistence of Ethnic Non-Traditional Student Participants	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
African American	20	0.650	13	65%
American Indian	1	1.000	1	100
Asian	11	0.636	7	64
Latino	58	0.517	30	52
International Students	2	1.000	2	100

The persistence data of non-traditional students who did not participate, in the First Year Seminar (English 1190), who were classified ethnic minority are displayed in the chart on page 114. All ethnic minority non-participants persisted at rates lower than ethnic minority participants did, with the exception of Latino. Latino non-participants persisted at a slightly higher percentage than Latino participants did. African Americans persisted at 54%, American Indians at 50%, Asians at 57%, Latinos at 56% and International students persisted at 83%.

Persistence of Ethnic Non-Traditional Student Non-Participants	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
African American	91	0.538	49	54%
American Indian	14	0.500	7	50
Asian	53	0.566	30	57
Latino	245	0.563	138	56
International Students	12	0.833	10	83

Although most ethnic minority student participants persisted at higher persistence rates than ethnic minority non-participants the p-values of the Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level is  $p = 0.678$ . Therefore, the slightly higher persistence rates can not be contributed to participating in the First Year Seminar (English 1190).

#### Age and Persistence

Finally, freshman, in the current study, who were 23 years and older were included in the non-traditional students sub-sets, as either a participant or a non-participant. The persistence of non-traditional freshmen that participated in the First Year Seminar (English 1190), at Metropolitan State College of Denver, is depicted, by age, in the chart on page 115. There were 11 students who were non-traditional freshman 23 years of age and older during the Fall 2000 semester. Of the 11 students, seven students persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

Persistence of Non-Traditional Student Participants by Age	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
23 – 27	7	0.571	4	57%
28 – 32	1	1.000	1	100
33 – 37	1	1.000	1	100
38 – 42	2	0.500	1	50
43 – 51	-	-	-	-

Dashes indicate no student enrollment.

Non-participants who were 23 years and older persisted at lower numbers than did participants who were 23 years and older. This can be seen in the chart below.

Persistence of Non-Traditional Student Non-Participants by Age	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
23 – 27	116	0.422	49	49%
28 – 32	48	0.354	17	35
33 – 37	26	0.384	10	38
38 – 42	13	0.461	6	46
43 – 51	7	0.285	2	28

Once again, the higher persistence rates attributed to participants, 23 years and older are not considered the result of participating in the First Year Seminar (English 1190) because  $p > 0.05$ .

#### The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Non-traditional freshmen were also removed from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas participant/non-participant sub-groups before analysis was conducted to determine persistence. The variables part-time enrollments, undeclared major, 23 years of age and older, and/or ethnic minority were, again, the determinants of non-traditional student classification. There were 53 freshmen that participated in EPY 101 during the Fall 2000

semester and 49 of them met the non-traditional student classification. Freshman that did not participate in EPY 101 and met the non-traditional classification totaled 1.263. Thus, two sub-sets were created from the records of non-traditional freshmen: non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants. Here again, a Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was used to analyze persistence of non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants for EPY 101 at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. These results are shown in Table 13 below.

Table 13  
Comparison of Persistence to Fall 2001 Semester  
of Non-Traditional Participants and Non-Participants  
at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	849	0.689	0.470	0.013
Participant (1)	38	0.776	0.422	0.060
Difference = $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$				
Estimate for difference: -0.0845				
95% CI for difference: (-0.2104, 0.0414)				
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs not =): T-Value = -1.32 P-Value = 0.188*				
<u>Note.</u> *p > .05				

There was no statistically significant difference between the persistence rates of non-traditional students who participated in EPY 101, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and non-traditional students who did not participate with a p-value = 0.188. Non-traditional student persistence is shown in the chart on page 117.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Persisters	Non-Persisters	Total	Percentage
Participants	38	11	49/53	78%
Non-Participants	849	414	1263/2261	67 %

P = 0.188

University of Nevada, Las Vegas freshmen that are found in the current study, which met at least one or more of the four qualifiers to be classified as a non-traditional student, during the Fall 2000 semester, totaled 1,312. Non-traditional students who participated in EPY 101, during the Fall 2000 semester, numbered 49 and 38 persisted to their second year. Students who did not participate in EPY 101, that were classified, as non-traditional students equaled 1,263 and 849 persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. There was a .09% difference between the persistence rate of non-traditional participants and non-participants and no statistically significant difference was found at  $p = 0.862$ .

Although there was no statistically significant difference in the persistence rates of non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants, a discussion concerning the persistence of the various dimensions that define *non-traditional freshmen*, used in this study, seems fitting. The freshmen, from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, were classified non-traditional, for this study, if they had one or more non-traditional qualifiers (i.e. part-time enrollment status, undeclared major, ethnic minority, and/or 23 years old or older). The following discussion focuses on the persistence of freshmen who were enrolled part-time, had not declared a major, were classified ethnic minority, and/or were 23 years of age or older during the Fall 2000 semester.

### Part-time Enrollment and Persistence

Part-time enrollment status was one of the four dimensions or variables used to qualify freshmen for non-traditional classification. The persistence rates of those students who were enrolled part-time and thus, met at least one of the qualifications for non-traditional student classification are listed in the chart below.

Persistence of Part-time Non-Traditional Students	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
Participants	3	0.667	2	66%
Non-Participants	185	0.410	76	41%

There were 49 non-traditional students who participated in EPY 101, and 3 of them were enrolled on a part-time basis during the Fall 2000 semester. Therefore, 66% of part-time participants persisted to their second year.

Non-participants who qualified for non-traditional classifications were 1,263 in number, and 185 of those students were enrolled on a part-time basis during the Fall 2000 semester. Out of the 185 part-time non-traditional students, who did not participate in EPY 101, 76 or 42% persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

### Undeclared Major and Persistence

Students who had not declared a major during the Fall 2000 semester were also classified as non-traditional students. A description of this sub-set can be found in the chart displayed on page 119.



Persistence of Undeclared Majors who were Non-Traditional Students	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
Participants	47	0.7872	37	78%
Non-Participants	469	0.6951	325	70%

There were a total of 47 students who participated in EPY 101 who did not declare a major during the Fall 2000 semester. Of those students, 37 or 78 % persisted to their second year, or the Fall 2001 semester. Non-participants, who had not declared a major, totaled 469 and 325 or 70%, persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

#### Ethnicity and Persistence

Ethnic minorities, African American, American Indian, Asian, Latino, or International students, were also classified a non-traditional freshman. A description of the persistence to the Fall 2001 semester of those ethnic minority freshmen that participated in EPY 101 can be seen in the chart located on page 120. None of the African Americans who participated in EPY 101 persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. There were 6 Latino participants and 100% persisted to their second year. Asians persisted at the rate of 86%. There were no students classified as American Indian and International students who participated in EPY 101 during the Fall 2000 semester.

Persistence of Ethnic, Non-Traditional Student Participants	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
African American	4	0.000	0	-
American Indian	-	-	-	-
Asian	14	0.875	12	86
Latino	6	1.000	6	100
International Students	-	-	-	-

The persistence data of non-traditional students who did not participate, in EPY 101, who were classified ethnic minority, are displayed in the chart located below. African Americans persisted at 61%, American Indians at 63%, Asians at 77%, Latinos at 68% and International Students at 70%.

Persistence of Ethnic, Non-Traditional Student Non-Participants	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
African American	192	0.619	119	61%
American Indian	33	0.636	21	63
Asian	342	0.769	263	77
Latino	242	0.694	168	69
International Students	37	0.702	26	70

at 57%, Latinos at 56% and International students persisted at 83%. Although Asian and Latino participants persisted at slightly higher rates than Asian and Latino participants the p-value of the Two-Sample T-Test was  $p = 0.188$ . Therefore, the slightly higher persistence rate could not be contributed to participating in EPY 101.

#### Age and Persistence

Finally, freshman, in the current study, who were 23 years and older were included in the non-traditional students sub-sets, as either a participant or a non-participant. The

persistence of University of Nevada, Las Vegas non-traditional freshman ages 23 years and older are depicted in the chart below. Non-traditional freshman ages 23 years and older did not enroll in EPY 101, during the Fall 2000 semester.

The persistence rates of non-participants by age can be seen in the chart below.

Persistence of Non-Traditional Student Non-Participants by Age	N	Mean	Fall 2001 Enrollment Numbers	Percentage
23 – 27	12	0.500	6	50%
28 – 32	2	0.500	1	50
33 – 37	2	0.500	1	50
38 – 42	1	1.000	1	100
43 – 51	-	-	-	-

Dashes indicate no student enrollment

Enrollment numbers of first semester freshman, during the Fall 2000 semester, was very low. However, non-participants 23 years of age or older persisted at very decent rates.

#### Research Question #4:

Do non-traditional student participants in a freshman success type course attain a higher GPA than non-traditional student non-participants by the beginning of their sophomore (second) year?

Non-traditional participant and non-participant sub-sets were used to reveal whether or not non-traditional participants attained a higher GPA than non-traditional non-participants. However, Two-Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was conducted using only the records of participants and non-participants, which were classified as non-traditional students and who had persisted to the Fall 2001 semester.

Table 14 on page 122 reveals the analysis of these data.

Table 14  
Comparison of GPA's  
of Metropolitan State College of Denver  
Non-Traditional Participants and Non-Participants  
Who Persisted

Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	645	2.611	0.814	0.032
Participant (1)	83	2.559	0.645	0.071

Difference =  $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$

Estimate for difference: 0.0512

95% CI for difference: (-0.1028, 0.2051)

T-Test of difference = 0 (vs not =): T-Value = 0.66 P-Value = 0.512\*

Note. \*p > .05

There was no statistically significant difference between the GPAs of non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants with a p-value > .05 where p = 0.512.

A Two –Sample T-Test applied at the 95% confidence level was also conducted on the University of Nevada, Las Vegas non-traditional sub-sets. Table 15 located on page 123 displays the results of this analysis. There was no statistically significant difference between the GPAs of non-traditional participants and non-traditional non-participants with p-value > 0.05 at p = 0.558.

**Table 15**  
**Comparison of GPA's**  
**of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
**Non-Traditional Non-Participants and Participants**  
**Who Persisted**

Participation Code	X	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Non-Participants (0)	849	2.761	0.637	0.022
Participant (1)	38	2.693	0.68845	0.11

Difference =  $\mu(0) - \mu(1)$

Estimate for difference: 0.067

95% CI for difference: (-0.163, 0.2971)

T-Test of difference = 0 (vs not =): T-Value = 0.59 P-Value = 0.558\*

Note. \* $p > .05$

The following chart displays the GPA mean averages of non-traditional participants and non-participants, in this present study, at the beginning of the Fall 2000 semester.

Fall 2001 Grade Point Averages of Non-Traditional Persisters	Participants	Non-Participants
Metropolitan State College of Denver		
N	83	645
Mean	2.56	2.61
Standard Deviation	0.640	0.810
University of Nevada, Las Vegas		
N	38	849
Mean	2.69	2.76
Standard Deviation	0.680	0.640

$p = 0.558$

Students who persisted to the 2001 Fall semester and were classified as non-traditional non-participants at both Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas had a slightly higher GPA mean than the participants. However, no statistically significant difference was realized since the p-value is  $> .05$  at  $p = .558$ .

These research findings and demographic trends become relevant to freshman success courses when we consider that many have been designed to promote academic and social integration and that the demographics emerging on urban college and university campuses are changing. More specifically, both the First Year Seminar (English 1190) and EPY 101 have been designed to help participants integrate in the classroom as well as in the campus. This was to be achieved by helping participants:

- Develop essential academic skills
- Ease transition to campus
- Provide support through resources or support services

Achieving these objectives are important if large less selective urban WICHE colleges and universities want to realize higher rates of persistence and academic achievement with the changing populations they serve. This is important because the student populations that they serve are becoming more non-traditional. These non-traditional students are considered the most difficult to retain and thus, they historically have persisted at lower numbers than traditional students have. Helping these students achieve academic success presents a challenge for the urban university and/or college.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

“Let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs,  
that they may not be unfruitful.” (Titus 3:14)

#### Introduction

Urban universities and colleges are faced with a major challenge – to help increase the persistence of an ever-increasing non-traditional student population or ‘new majority student’ (Hall, Mickelson, and Pollard, 1985; Kuh and Vespar, 1991). Non-traditional students tend to be 23 years or older, enrolled part-time, have not declared a major and/or are ethnic minority. “Relying on traditional methods to retain non-traditional students have not been very successful. And, researchers claim that freshman success courses, when predicated on a recommended conceptual framework, respond to the needs of diverse student populations; counteract high attrition rates; and successfully integrate freshman into campus academic and social systems (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Noel, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1975; Tinto, 1975). Unfortunately, none of the research previously reported has focused primarily on the impact that freshman success courses have on freshmen persistence and academic achievement at large, public, less selective urban colleges or universities. Specifically, one area of investigation not yet explored was the effect of participation in freshman success courses at a WICHE (Western

Interstate Commission for Higher Education) Urban University or College, on academic performance and persistence.

Freshman success courses are interventions that faculty and student affairs professionals, at urban universities and colleges, implement in an effort to address the challenge of retaining a non-traditional student population that is quickly becoming the campus majority. It is advocated that these courses be offered because research has revealed that they respond to the needs of diverse student populations, counteract high attrition rates, and successfully integrate students into campus academic and social systems (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Cuseo, 1991). Moreover, these interventions, if effective, support Gardner's (1986) stated goal of increasing college survival and persistence.

#### Methodology

The present investigation was an exploratory/descriptive investigation of the differential effects of taking one or another type of freshman success course. It was an ex post facto study because the data was retrieved from records of the participating institutions. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect that participation in a freshman success course had on subsequent student persistence and academic achievement. The study was also designed to classify the type of freshman success course offered at the WICHE Institutions participating in the study. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques and procedures were used to analyze the data. Boise State University, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas were the three WICHE Institutions initially selected for participation in this study. They were chosen because they were the only WICHE schools that met the criteria to be classified as large, public, urban, less selective colleges or universities.



Citing lack of staff time and resources, Boise State University declined to participate in the study. Several attempts to have them participate and/or secure the resources failed. Thus, Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas were the two institutions that participated in the study.

A survey instrument designed to gather demographic and academic information on students who did or did not participate in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester was distributed to both urban WICHE Institutions for completion. A second survey instrument was given to program coordinators of each freshman success course. The researcher classified each freshman success course in the two institutions using responses on this survey instrument.

Two-Sample T-Tests with an .05 level of significance were used in the analysis of data to determine impact, if any, the freshman success courses in the study had on student persistence and academic achievement. This technique was also used to determine if participating in freshman success courses had any impact on the persistence and academic achievement of non-traditional students.

First-time non-transfer freshmen at Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas were the subjects of the study. The two freshman classes consisted of a population of 4,142 first semester freshman that attended on of the two institutions during the Fall 2000 semester. More specifically, the subjects of the study were 1, 828 freshmen that attended Metropolitan State College of Denver and 2,314 freshmen that attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in the Fall of 2000. At each institutions, the subjects where first-time freshmen (non-transfers). Each freshman class was divided into two subgroups based on whether or not they participated

in a freshman success course during their first semester (Fall 2000). Specifically, at Metropolitan State College of Denver the subjects consisted of 189 participants and 1,639 non-participants.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, freshman class comprised the second study group and consisted of two sub-groups, as well. The first sub-group was comprised of 53 participants and 2,261 non-participants. All subjects were followed through the beginning of the Fall 2001 semester, which was the first term of their sophomore (second) year.

Non-traditional students were identified from these freshman classes, and formed an additional subset for study. At Metropolitan State College of Denver, there were 146 non-traditional participants and 1,172 non-participants. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas non-traditional student sub-sets consisted of 49 non-traditional participants and 1,263 non-traditional non-participants.

Participants and non-participants were identified as nontraditional if they met one, or more of the following:

- enrolled part-time,
- were ethnic minority (i.e. African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, or International),
- 23 years of age or older, and/or
- had not declared a major.

Research has previously used these characteristics, along with others, to define non-traditional students (Jacoby, 1990; Jun & Tierney, 1999; Kuh & Vesper, 1991). It is also important to point out that these factors have also been associated with low persistence

and poor academic achievement (Kuh & Vesper, 1991; Pascarella and Champan, 1983; Tinto, 1987). Longitudinal data was used to determine whether or not academic achievement levels and sophomore persistence rates of non-traditional participants differed significantly from non-traditional students who did not participate.

To assess the impact of freshman success courses on persistence and academic achievement certain parameters were established. First, the study was restricted to freshman to sophomore (second year) persistence. Second, grade point averages or GPAs and enrollment status at the time of Fall 2001 enrollment were the only variables utilized as indicators of academic achievement and persistence. Third, inclusion was restricted to those variables for which data could be accessed and collected with reasonable ease. Lastly, the researcher made a determination of which additional variables were critical to the study. Consequently, background information that would be useful in demographic analyses was collected on each freshman in addition to GPAs and enrollment status. The researcher created two instruments to gather the necessary demographic, academic, and programmatic information for the study.

A survey of the literature indicated that there were five different types of freshman success courses commonly implemented. The literature also provided recommendations for curriculum design and administrative delivery of the freshman success course, thus there was a need to classify the courses found in the study. Therefore, these recommendations were also considered in the design of the instruments.

The investigator created two instruments to gather necessary data. The first was labeled "Request for Student Data Memorandum" (see Appendix page 144). It was designed to gather data that would reveal whether students enrolled in a freshman success

course achieved academically and persisted in greater numbers than those students who did not participate in a freshman success course. Specifically, the instrument requested Fall 2000 data on the study populations and consisted of two components. The first component was designed to gather information on first-semester freshmen that participated or did not participate in a freshman success course during the Fall 2000 semester. The second part of the request was intended to collect quantitative data on various segments of the total student populations found on the campuses of the college and university that participated in this study.

The second instrument was labeled “2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges (see Appendix page 144). This instrument requested information on curriculum design and administrative delivery. The instrument facilitated easy but accurate classification of the type of freshman success course employed at each institution.

In order to retrieve the data, a dual-data collection process was developed. The data on the student population in this study was collected by forwarding the Request for Student Data Memorandum, by electronic mail (e-mail), to the Director of Institutional Research at Metropolitan State College of Denver; and Director of Institutional Analysis & Planning, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Both institutions returned the first component of the request in the form of spreadsheets using Micro Soft Excel.

The second section of the Request for Student Data Memorandum was returned completed in its original form, via e-mail, by the Metropolitan State College of Denver. The second section of the instrument was returned via facsimile (fax) from the University

of Nevada, Las Vegas. Combined, these data provided the researcher with the necessary Fall 2000 semester information on the subjects identified for participation in the study.

Information used to classify the type of freshman success course offered at each of the WICHE Institutions was collected from the administrators identified as the individuals responsible for administering the freshman success course at their respective institutions. The Director of Academic Advising at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas returned the survey (see Appendix page 151), via e-mail, accompanied by a copy of a course curriculum outline and course syllabus. The Director of the First Year Seminar (English 1190) at Metropolitan State College returned the completed survey, with a copy of the course outline and syllabus via the United States Post Office.

#### Summary/Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the number of freshman success course participants that persisted to their second year (Fall 2001) and freshman non-participants that persisted to the same semester. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference in the GPAs of participants and non-participants by the beginning of their second year. Furthermore, there was statistical significant difference in the persistence to Fall 2001 or GPAs of non-traditional students who participated in a freshman success course and non-traditional students who did not participate.

Interpretation of the data collected from the 2000-2001 Survey of Freshman Persistence at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges enabled the researcher to classify the freshman success courses presented in the study. Responses from the survey collected from Metropolitan State College of Denver clearly classified the First Year Seminar (English 1190) as an academic seminar that has had strong support from faculty,

administrators, and students for nineteen years. The course carries three- (3) academic credits toward general education requirements and is taught by faculty, student affairs professionals, and other campus administrators. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas survey responses indicated that EPY 101 is classified as an extended orientation course. The course has been offered for fourteen years and receives below average support from faculty, administrators, and students. EPY 101 carries two credits toward satisfying the elective requirements and is taught by student affairs professionals.

### Implications of the Study

Although no statistical significant differences were seen in the persistence or GPAs of all participants and all non-participants, in both freshman classes, the very fact there were no differences does support in part the claim made by Barefoot and Fidler (1996) that freshman success courses respond to the needs of diverse student populations, counteract high attrition, and successfully integrates students into campus academic and social systems. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) state that grades earned are probably the single most revealing indicator of successful adjustment to the educational expectations of a particular course of study. In the present study, students who had not participated in a freshman success course, at either of the WICHE Institutions, had GPAs only slightly larger than students who had participated. This is encouraging. The concrete outcome was that the non-participants and participants at the Metropolitan State College of Denver, had average GPAs at 2.62 and 2.57 respectively. These were both above the benchmark of 2.50 set by Metropolitan State College of Denver. Likewise, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas non-participants and participants had average GPAs of 2.81 and 2.70 respectively. Again, these surpassed the 2.50 benchmark for maintaining eligibility for graduation.

While GPAs were used as indicators of academic achievement, enrollment status at the beginning of Fall 2001, was also used as an indicator of persistence. Again, there was no statistically significant difference but unlike GPAs, the participant sub-groups, including the non-traditional student participants, at both WICHE Institutions were found to persist at slightly higher percentages than their non-participant counterparts. Thus, the current study supports the claim presented by Gordon (1986) that the freshman success course facilitate college survival and persistence. While this study did not attempt to determine the causes of these positive effects, several reasons can be can be speculated from the review of related literature and the descriptive analysis of the participant and non-participant student sub-groups.

An analysis of the descriptive data showed that the majority of first-semester freshman who that participated in this study were non-traditional students. This would definitely appear to support the claim that Kuh and Vesper (1991) make that non-traditional students are becoming the new campus majority. Specifically, in the present study, students were classified as non-traditional if they were enrolled part-time, had not declared a major, were 23 years of age or older, and/or were classified as an ethnic minority. Metropolitan State College enrolled 1,828 first-semester freshman during the Fall 2000 semester, 72% were non-traditional students. The first-semester freshman class at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and represented in the study, totaled 2,314 and 56% were non-traditional.

However, the majority of the non-traditional students who participated in freshman success courses at the WICHE Institutions investigated in the present study, were enrolled full-time. This data supports the claim made by Tinto (1987) that more time

spent in academic activities increases student persistence. This may have contributed to the slightly higher percentage of participants that persisted to the Fall 2001 semester. Furthermore, the very fact that the students elected to participate in a freshman success course may have made them different from those who chose not to take the course. Future research will be needed to determine if this is the case.

In addition, freshman success courses at both Metropolitan State College of Denver and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas enrolled a large percentage of non-traditional student participants that were undeclared majors. Specifically, 59% of the non-traditional students in the First Year Seminar (English 1190), at Metropolitan State College of Denver, had not declared a major. At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 96% of EPY 101 students were undeclared majors. However, participants enrolled in both freshman success courses who had not declared a major persisted at slightly higher percentages than did their non-participant counterparts. Tinto (1987) claims that the higher the level of a student's educational or occupational goals, the greater the likelihood of college completion (p. 40). In other words, if students can create a link between the goal of gaining a college education and other career or personal values the greater the likelihood that they will persist. If this is true perhaps the freshman success courses have been somewhat effect in assisting students who enroll identify an appropriate major.

This study did not control for the uniformity of the course material taught in the freshman success courses, the training or teaching styles of the instructors; the assumption was made that the course objectives were quite similar. Perhaps it would be useful to examine the course content offered by these freshman success courses to determine if in fact they contributed in some way to the slightly higher persistence of



participants that were undeclared majors. Again, future research is needed. Gardner (1986) and Gordon (1985) claim that course content should help students understand the elements of a good education, and the qualities of an educated person, as well as help them develop career goals. The syllabi, for the First Year Seminar (English 1190), as well as for EPY 101, clearly show opportunities for participants to learn the value of education and establish career objectives. Although this study was not intended to monitor whether its subjects who had not declared a major during the Fall 2000 semester, eventually declared a major, it would be interesting to pursue this agenda in the future.

Although the majority of students attending the WICHE Institutions represented in the present study, were found to be characterized by various non-traditional characteristics, they were for the most part under the age of 23 and white. Yet, non-traditional first-semester freshman, 23 years of age or older, who participated in the Metropolitan State College of Denver First Year Seminar (English 1190) persisted at higher levels than non-participants 23 years of age or older. However, participants of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas EPY 101 course were all between the ages of 15 – 19. Tinto (1987) suggests that many older students come to campus for very limited periods of time solely for the purpose of meeting their classes and attending to formal requirements of degree completion (p. 74). Perhaps the freshman success course at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas can be developed into a course where the credit hours earned count towards general studies requirements, instead of one where the credit hours earned count towards elective requirements.

Similarly, non-traditional ethnic minorities, found in the study, which participated in the Metropolitan State College of Denver First Year Seminar (English 1190), persisted at

slightly higher levels than their non-participant counterparts, with the exception of Latino participants who persisted at a slightly higher percentage than Latino non-participants.

At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, non-traditional participants classified as ethnic minorities persisted at slightly lower percentages than their non-participant counterparts. However, African American participants failed to persist all together. Moreover, during the Fall 2000 semester, only one American Indian student enrolled in the Metropolitan State College of Denver First Year Seminar (English 1190) and none enrolled in the University of Nevada, Las Vegas EPY 101. This would appear to have implications for recruitment by the institutions that reach beyond their freshman success courses.

This data may support the observation made by Tinto (1987) and Pounds (1989) that minority student participation and persistence may be directly linked to having a sufficient number of students on campus, or in class, for them to connect with and form a sense of community. However, to understand why a student doesn't persist or decides not to participate in one course or another requires the researcher to refer to the understandings and experiences of that student. Thus, it is recommended that the administrators of each of the freshman success courses, identified by the study, evaluate their programs, and survey their students, for effectiveness annually. Unfortunately, this study was delimited to a secondary analysis of ex poste facto data currently available in the Metropolitan State of Denver and The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Student Information. Specifically, it did not include a survey of current student attitudes and experiences, as they relate to participating in a freshman success course.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Upcraft (1985), Kuh and Vesper (1991) proposed that campuses enhance freshman success by promoting student-to-student interaction, promote faculty-student interaction,

and offer extracurricular opportunities that are academically purposeful. Therefore, it is essential that the course content and administrative delivery of freshman success courses be examined more closely to determine which elements lead to academic achievement and persistence, and which elements do not. Much of the literature on freshman success courses (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Fidler, 1994; Gardner, 1986; Gordon & Grites, 1984) focuses on the course taken while in a residential college. However, more research is needed on the effects that these courses have on student academic success when students take them at large, public, urban less-selective universities and colleges. The aim of this study was to do just that and share the results with other urban universities and colleges.

The study population of the present study was limited to first-semester freshmen enrolled in Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas from Fall 2000 to Fall 2001. Thus, generalizations could not be made beyond those parameters. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies focus on the comparison of freshman success course participants to non-participants, to determine if there is a difference in the characteristics of those who participate compared to those students who chose not to participate in a freshman success course. Moreover, qualitative research is needed that examine student perceptions and attitudes concerning a felt sense of community, student-to-student and faculty-to-student involvement, and academic and social integration. In addition, future research should review the course content of the different types of freshman success courses to determine the effect each has on student academic achievement, persistence, academic and professional goal setting, and involvement. It is further recommended that studies be conducted applying a quasi-experimental research design utilizing analysis of data by inferential statistics so as

to establish cause-and-effect relationships between freshman success courses, other interventions students may have received, and outcomes that define student success. These data would provide excellent research results pertaining to the course content and administrative delivery of freshman success courses, and describe how they interact with other campus support services.

Finally, longitudinal research is recommended in order to establish credible evidence of the effectiveness of freshman success courses and the value they provide for students within urban universities and colleges in general.

## APPENDICES

## MEMORANDUM

**To:**  
**From:** Velicia McMillan, UNLV Doctoral Candidate  
**Date:** September 23, 2002  
**Re:** Requested Student Data for Dissertation

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I really appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedules to discuss my request for data. Per our conversation, the data I am requesting is needed to conduct the research for my dissertation: **The Impact of Freshman Seminars on Freshman to Sophomore Persistence at Urban WICHE Institutions.**

The purpose of my study is to determine whether or not participating in a freshman seminar has an independent relationship to the retention or the academic achievement of students attending urban universities in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Boise State University, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are candidates for participation in this study because they are WICHE institutions. In addition, these institutions also identify with the classification of being urban universities as defined by the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities.

The coordinators for the freshman seminars, located on your campuses, have also been contacted. A questionnaire designed to gather primarily cognitive data will be e-mailed to them within a few days. Specifically, the questionnaire primarily focuses on ascertaining information that will help identify, compare, and contrast the various forms of freshman seminar programming found in urban WICHE universities and colleges as it relates to freshman to sophomore persistence.

The questionnaire asks questions concerning institutional characteristics and administrative and content elements regarding the freshman seminar type(s) that can be found on your campus. I have attached a copy of that instrument to this document.

The following data will be used in the study:

**The following student population is defined as first-time freshmen, non-transfers, who participated in a Freshman Seminar during the Fall 2000 semester.**

The following variables are needed to define this population:

H.S. GPA

Part-time/Full-time status

Declaration of major as an entering first-time freshman

Commuter or Resident status

Gender

Ethnicity

Age

Enrolled 2001

Fall 2001 GPA

The following student population will be compared to the above population.

They are: first-time freshmen, non-transfers, who did not participate in a Freshman Seminar during the Fall 2000 semester.

The following variables are needed to define this population:

H.S. GPA

Part-time/Full-time status

Declaration of major as an entering first-time freshman

Commuter or Resident status

Gender

Ethnicity

Age

Enrolled 2001

Fall 2001 GPA

Does your institution (including any department or division) offer one or more Freshman Seminar? \_\_\_\_ yes, \_\_\_\_no

**(If yes, please provide the above requested data by seminar type in Microsoft Excel)**

**In addition, please provide the following information:**

1. Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_

2. City \_\_\_\_\_ 3. State \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

5. What was the approximate Fall 2000 undergraduate enrollment at your institution?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Please indicate the type of your institution.

\_\_\_\_4-year public

\_\_\_\_4-year private

\_\_\_\_Other

7. Please provide your Fall 2000 enrollment figures.

\_\_\_\_Full-time undergraduates

\_\_\_\_Part-time undergraduates

8. What were your Fall 2000 freshman enrollment figures?  
 Full-time freshmen  
 Part-time freshmen
9. What was the total Fall 2000 enrollment figure for the freshman seminar?  
 Full-time freshmen  
 Part-time freshmen
10. What were the Fall 2000 first year non-transfer student enrollment figures for the freshman year seminar?  
 Full-time  
 Part-time
11. How many Fall 2000 freshmen did not enroll in a freshman seminar?  
 Full-time  
 Part-time
12. How many Fall 2000 first year non-transfer students did not enroll in a freshman seminar?  
 Full-time  
 Part-time
13. Please provide your Fall 2001 enrollment figures.  
 Full-time undergraduates  
 Part-time undergraduates
14. How will this data be secured by your institution?

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Again, thank you so very much for your assistance and consideration. I hope to hear from you in the very near future. I am diligently working toward a May 2003 graduation. Thus, I'm requesting the data be returned to me by **October 11, 2002**. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me via e-mail at [vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us](mailto:vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us) or by telephone (480) 312-7252.



2000- 2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence  
at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Doctoral Program In Educational Leadership  
4545 Maryland Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89154

1. Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_
2. City \_\_\_\_\_ 3. State \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_
- Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the approximate undergraduate enrollment at your institution? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Please indicate the type of your institution.  
☐ 4-year public  
☐ 4-year private  
☐ Other
7. What is the nature of your freshman admissions policy?  
☐ Open  
☐ Open –some programs selective  
☐ Selective  
☐ Highly selective
8. Does your institution (including any department or division) offer one or more Freshman Seminar? ☐ yes, ☐ no  
 (If **yes**, please attach a current sample syllabus or course description with returned survey)

IF YOUR INSTITUTION DID NOT OFFER A FRESHMAN SEMINAR TYPE COURSE IN FALL 2000. PLEASE DISREGARD REMAING QUESTIONS, AND RETURN SURVEY IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOP. THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE.

\*\*\*\*\*

IF YOUR INSTITUTION OFFERED A FRESHMAN SEMINAR TYPE COURSE IN FALL 2000, PLEASE COMPLETE THE REMAINING SURVEY QUESTIONS.

9. Check each discrete type of freshman seminar (a, b, c, d, e, or f) that exists on your campus.
  - a. ☐ ***Extended orientation seminars.*** Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival, or student success courses, these courses are taught by faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, graduate, and upper-level undergraduate students. Specific content varies widely but is likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life.

- b. **Academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections.**  
These courses may be elective or required, inter-or extra-disciplinary in focus, and will sometimes be a part of the required general education core. These courses often focus on the 'higher order' academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument.
- c. **Academic seminars on various topics.** In this type of seminar, each section will consider a different topic chosen by the faculty member who is the seminar instructor. These courses may evolve from any discipline. Students generally select their first- or second-choice seminar. In this genre, class size is often restricted to no more than 15 students.
- d. **Professional or discipline-based seminars.** These seminars may be offered in any academic department or professional school (engineering, nursing, agriculture) and are designed to give students a basic introduction to the academic expectations and professional applications of the major.
- e. **Basic study skills seminars.** These seminars provide some degree of remediation for students who are academically unprepared and focus on the most basic study skills such as reading, dictionary use, note-taking, and basic writing" (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).
- f. **Other** (Please describe in detail)

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**Please note:**

**IF YOU HAVE CHECKED MORE THAN ONE FRESHMAN SUCCESS COURSE TYPE, SELECT THE TYPE (a, b, c, d, e, or f) WITH THE HIGHEST TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ANSWER SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR THAT SEMINAR ONLY.**

10. I am answering remaining questions for seminar   a,   b,   c,   d,   e,   f

11. In your opinion, what are three primary goals of your freshman success program?

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12. If your course has a common curriculum across sections, what, in your opinion, are the most important topics that comprise the content of the freshman seminar? (List up to 5 topics.)

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13. What is the maximum number of students allowed to enroll in each freshman seminar section? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Who teaches the freshman seminar? (Check all that apply.)
- a. \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Student affairs professionals
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Other campus administrators
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Upper-level undergraduate students
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate students
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please identify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do freshman seminar instructors serve as academic advisors for students in their seminar sections? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no
16. How is the freshman seminar graded? \_\_\_pass/fail, \_\_\_letter grade
17. Is instructor training offered for freshman seminar instructors? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no
18. Is instructor training required for freshman seminar instructors? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no
19. If instructor training is offered, over what length of time does it occur? \_\_\_\_\_  
(e. g. one day, two days, five days, etc.)
20. How long has the freshman seminar been offered on your campus? \_\_\_\_\_years.
21. What freshmen are required to take the freshman seminar? \_\_\_all, \_\_\_some, \_\_\_none.
22. If you answered 'some' to the previous question, which freshmen (by category) are required to take the freshmen seminar?
- a. \_\_\_ Academically underprepared students
  - b. \_\_\_ Athletes
  - c. \_\_\_ Undecided students
  - d. \_\_\_ Students in particular residence hall
  - e. \_\_\_ Minority students
  - f. \_\_\_ Students within a specific major
  - g. \_\_\_ Honor students
  - h. \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
23. Are different sections of the freshman seminar offered for any of the following unique sub-populations of students? Check all that apply.
- a. \_\_\_ Adults
  - b. \_\_\_ Minority students
  - c. \_\_\_ Commuting students
  - d. \_\_\_ Athletes
  - e. \_\_\_ Disabled students
  - f. \_\_\_ International students
  - g. \_\_\_ Students residing within a particular residence hall
  - h. \_\_\_ Women
  - i. \_\_\_ Academically under prepared students
  - j. \_\_\_ Students within a specific major
  - k. \_\_\_ Honors students
  - l. \_\_\_ Undecided students
  - m. \_\_\_ Other, please identify
24. How many total classroom contact hours (clock hours) comprise the entire freshman seminar course? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Over what length of time is the freshman seminar offered? \_\_\_\_\_  
(example: six weeks, one semester)
26. Does the freshman seminar carry academic credit towards graduation? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no

27. If yes, how many semester/quarter hours or other credits does the freshman seminar carry?
- a.     one  
b.     two  
c.     three  
d.     more than three
28. If the freshman seminar carries academic credit, how does such credit apply?
- a.     toward core requirements  
b.     toward general education requirements  
c.     toward major requirements  
d.     toward other requirements (please describe)
29. Is the freshman seminar linked to, clustered, or paired with other courses (i. E. 'learning community approach')?     yes     no
30. On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), what do you believe to be the level of overall campus support (from students, faculty, staff, administration) for the freshman seminar?
- (low)     1     2     3     4     5 (high)

Thank you for your response. A written report of the results will be available late Spring, 2003. For more information, call or write the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Doctoral Program for Educational Leadership, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154. Phone: Dr. Dale Anderson, (702) 895-4580. E-Mail: [danders@ccmail.nevada.edu](mailto:danders@ccmail.nevada.edu).

## Office of Institutional Analysis/Research Contact Interview Protocol and Question

### Script:

Hi my name is Velicia McMillan-Haron. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. You were identified as the contact person for Institutional Analysis at (Boise State University); (Metropolitan State College of Denver); (University of Nevada, Las Vegas). I am conducting research for my dissertation, "The Impact of Freshman Seminars on Freshman Persistence at Urban WICHE Universities and Colleges." Your institution was chosen for participation because it is a WICHE Institution that is a member of the Coalition of Urban Metropolitan Universities and provides a first year experience or seminar for students.

The study requires data from first time freshmen enrolled in a first year seminar during the fall of 2000. Data from students who participated in a first year seminar will be compared to data from first time freshmen that did not participate in a first year seminar during the fall of 2000. Age, gender, ethnicity, full-time/part-time status, and commuter or non-commuter status are non-cognitive information also needed for each student. The study will use non-cognitive data, and cognitive data, including GPA and persistence of these students to the fall semester of 2001, to determine the impact of first year seminars at Urban WICHE institutions. Transfer students are not included in the study population.

If you agree to participate in this study, a formal request for data will be e-mailed to you. The request will reiterate the purpose of the study and specify the data needed. A second questionnaire will be mailed to those persons who coordinate the freshman seminar program on your campus. That questionnaire has been designed to gather cognitive data concerning the course content and administrative delivery of your first year seminar.

Is it possible for your program to participate in this study?

(If No, end the conversation and thank contact for his/her time) (If, Yes

(If Yes)

Thank you, you will receive a formal request for data via e-mail within the next few days. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me via e-mail at [vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us](mailto:vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us) or by telephone at (480) 312-7252.

Thanks again for taking time out of your very busy schedule to assist with my study.

Does your institution (including any department or division) offer one or more Freshman Seminar?   X   yes,        no

**(If yes, please provide the above requested data by seminar type in Microsoft Excel)**

**In addition, please provide the following information:**

1. Name of Institution Metropolitan State College of Denver

2. City Denver 3. State CO 4. Zip Code 80217

Your Name Fran Iannucci Title Statistical Analyst

5. What was the approximate Fall 2000 undergraduate enrollment at your institution?  
17688

6. Please indicate the type of your institution.  
  X   4-year public  
       4-year private  
       Other

7. Please provide your Fall 2000 enrollment figures.  
9725 Full-time undergraduates  
7963 Part-time undergraduates

8. What were your Fall 2000 freshman enrollment figures?  
3413 Full-time freshmen  
2224 Part-time freshmen

9. What was the total Fall 2000 enrollment figure for the freshman seminar?  
220 Full-time freshmen  
31 Part-time freshmen

10. What were the Fall 2000 first year non-transfer student enrollment figures for the freshman year seminar?  
170 Full-time  
19 Part-time

11. How many Fall 2000 freshmen did not enroll in a freshman seminar?  
3193 Full-time  
2193 Part-time

12. How many Fall 2000 first year non-transfer students did not enroll in a freshman seminar?  
1193 Full-time  
446 Part-time

13. Please provide your Fall 2001 enrollment figures.  
10356 Full-time undergraduates  
8089 Part-time undergraduates

14. How will this data be secured by your institution?  
Office of Institutional Research

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Again, thank you so very much for your assistance and consideration. I hope to hear from you in the very near future. I am diligently working toward a May 2003 graduation. Thus, I'm requesting the data be returned to me by **October 11, 2002**. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me via e-mail at [vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us](mailto:vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us) or by telephone (480) 312-7252.

Does your institution (including any department or division) offer one or more Freshman Seminar? ☒X\_ yes

**(If yes, please provide the above requested data by seminar type in Microsoft Excel)**

**In addition, please provide the following information:**

1. Name of Institution University of Nevada Las Vegas
2. City Las Vegas 3. State NV 4. Zip Code 89154
- Your Name Kari Coburn Title Director, Institutional Analysis & Planning
5. What was the approximate Fall 2000 undergraduate enrollment at your institution?  
17,327
6. Please indicate the type of your institution.  
☒X 4-year public  
☐ 4-year private  
☐ Other
7. Please provide your Fall 2000 enrollment figures.  
10,265 Full-time undergraduates  
7,062 Part-time undergraduates
8. What were your Fall 2000 freshman enrollment figures?  
3,305 Full-time freshmen  
789 Part-time freshmen
9. What was the total freshman enrollment figure for the Fall 2000 freshman seminar?  
(Total enrollment for all types of students was 80.)  
54 Full-time freshmen  
7 Part-time freshmen
10. What were the Fall 2000 first-time freshmen enrollment figures for the freshman year seminar?  
50 Full-time  
3 Part-time
11. How many Fall 2000 freshmen did not enroll in a freshman seminar?  
3251 Full-time  
782 Part-time
12. How many Fall 2000 first-time freshmen did not enroll in a freshman seminar?  
2077 Full-time  
184 Part-time



13. Please provide your Fall 2001 enrollment figures.

12,234 Full-time undergraduates

6,372 Part-time undergraduates

14. How will this data be secured by your institution?

By the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning in Microsoft Excel.

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Again, thank you so very much for your assistance and consideration. I hope to hear from you in the very near future. I am diligently working toward a May 2003 graduation. Thus, I'm requesting the data be returned to me by **October 11, 2002**. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me via e-mail at [vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us](mailto:vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us) or by telephone (480) 312-7252.

**Freshman Seminar Program Contact  
Interview Protocol and Question**

**Script:**

Hi my name is Velicia McMillan-Haron. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. You were identified as the contact person for the First Yes Program (Boise State University); First Year Program (Metropolitan State College of Denver); EPY (Educational Psychology) 101 Courses (University of Nevada, Las Vegas). I am conducting research for my dissertation, "The Impact of Freshman Seminars on Freshman Persistence at Urban WICHE Universities and Colleges." Your institution was chosen for participation because it is a WICHE Institution that is a member of the Coalition of Urban Metropolitan Universities and provides a first year experience or seminar for students.

The study requires data from first time freshmen enrolled in a first year seminar during the fall of 2000. Data from students who participated in a first year seminar will be compared to data from first time freshmen that did not participate in a first year seminar during the fall of 2000. Age, gender, ethnicity, full-time/part-time status, and commuter or non-commuter status are non-cognitive information also needed for each student. The study will use non-cognitive data, and cognitive data, including GPA and persistence of these students to the fall semester of 2001, to determine the impact of first year seminars at Urban WICHE institutions. Transfer students are not included in the study population. The Department of Institutional Analysis, specifically (Ms. Bell -Cheir, Boise State); (Ms. Corburn, University of Nevada, Las Vegas); (Mr. Wilkens, Metropolitan State College-Denver) has agreed to provide non-cognitive data needed to conduct my research.

If you agree to participate in this study, a questionnaire will be mailed to you. The questionnaire has been designed to gather cognitive data concerning the course content and administrative delivery of your first year seminar. Please complete the questionnaire and return it by e-mail to [vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us](mailto:vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us). You may also return the questionnaire via US Mail to: 5526 West Ivanhoe Street, Chandler, AZ 85226

Is it possible for your program to participate in this study?

**(If No, end the conversation and thank contact for his/her time)**

**(If Yes)**

**Thank you, you will receive a formal request for data via e-mail within the next few days. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me via e-mail at [vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us](mailto:vmcmillan@ci.scottsdale.az.us) or by telephone at (480) 312-7252.**

**Thanks again for taking time out of your very busy schedule to assist with my study.**

**(Sample Survey Cover Letter)**

**2000- 2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence at  
WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges**

Dear Administrator:

Once completed, the enclosed questionnaire will help me collect data for my doctoral dissertation. The purpose of the research is to gather data that will support or refute the claim that participation in a freshman seminar, at a WICHE Urban university or college, helps first year students persist to the sophomore year. Your institution was chosen to participate in this study because you are members of WICHE and the Coalition of Urban & Metropolitan Universities.

Specifically the enclosed document primarily focuses on ascertaining information that will help identify, compare, and contrast the various forms of freshman seminar programming found in urban WICHE universities and colleges as it relates to freshman to sophomore persistence.

The questionnaire asks questions concerning institutional characteristics and administrative and content elements regarding the freshman seminar type(s) that can be found on your campus.

I hope that your institution will agree to participate in this study. Next spring, all participating institutions will receive a summary report. Please return the completed survey to Velicia McMillan, 5526 West Ivanhoe Street, Chandler, AZ 85226 by September 30, 2002. For your convenience, a stamped – self addressed envelope has been provided for you to return the survey and any additional materials. I appreciate your cooperation with this study and thank you in advance for your professional contribution. Please call (480) 312-7252 if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Velicia McMillan  
Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Dale Anderson  
Chair, Dissertation Committee

**2000- 2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence  
at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership  
4545 Maryland Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89154**

1. Name of Institution University of Nevada, Las Vegas
  2. City: Las Vegas
  3. State: NV
  4. Zip Code: 89514-2001
- Your Name: Anne Hein Title: Director, Student Development Center
5. What is the approximate undergraduate enrollment at your institution? 20,000
  6. Please indicate the type of your institution.  
☒ 4-year public  
☐ 4-year private  
☐ Other
  7. What is the nature of your freshman admissions policy?  
☐ Open  
☒ Open –some programs selective  
☐ Selective  
☐ Highly selective
  8. Does your institution (including any department or division) offer one or more Freshman Seminar? ☒ yes, ☐ no

(If **yes**, please attach a current sample syllabus or course description with returned survey)

IF YOUR INSTITUTION DID NOT OFFER A FRESHMAN SEMINAR TYPE COURSE IN FALL 2000. PLEASE DISREGARD REMAING QUESTIONS, AND RETURN SURVEY IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOP. THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IF YOUR INSTITUTION OFFERED A FRESHMAN SEMINAR TYPE COURSE IN FALL 2000, PLEASE COMPLETE THE REMAINING SURVEY QUESTIONS.**

9. Check each discrete type of freshman seminar (a, b, c, d, e, or f) that exists on your campus.
- a. X ***Extended orientation seminars.*** Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival, or student success courses, these courses are taught by faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, graduate, and upper-level undergraduate students. Specific content varies widely but is likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life.

- b. **Academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections.**  
These courses may be elective or required, inter-or extra-disciplinary in focus, and will sometimes be a part of the required general education core. These courses often focus on the 'higher order' academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument.
- c. **Academic seminars on various topics.** In this type of seminar, each section will consider a different topic chosen by the faculty member who is the seminar instructor. These courses may evolve from any discipline. Students generally select their first- or second-choice seminar. In this genre, class size is often restricted to no more than 15 students.
- d. **Professional or discipline-based seminars.** These seminars may be offered in any academic department or professional school (engineering, nursing, agriculture) and are designed to give students a basic introduction to the academic expectations and professional applications of the major.
- e. **Basic study skills seminars.** These seminars provide some degree of remediation for students who are academically unprepared and focus on the most basic study skills such as reading, dictionary use, note-taking, and basic writing" (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).
- f. **Other** (Please describe in detail)

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**Please note:**

**IF YOU HAVE CHECKED MORE THAN ONE FRESHMAN SUCCESS COURSE TYPE, SELECT THE TYPE (a, b, c, d, e, or f) WITH THE HIGHEST TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ANSWER SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR THAT SEMINAR ONLY.**

10. I am answering remaining questions for seminar X a,    b,    c,    d,    e,    f

11. In your opinion, what are three primary goals of your freshman success program?

See Syllabus

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12. If your course has a common curriculum across sections, what, in your opinion, are the most important topics that comprise the content of the freshman seminar? (List up to 5 topics.)

Expectations of higher education, time management, study skills, major/career planning, goal setting

13. What is the maximum number of students allowed to enroll in each freshman seminar section? 25
14. Who teaches the freshman seminar? (Check all that apply.)
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty
  - b. X Student affairs professionals
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Other campus administrators
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Upper-level undergraduate students
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate students
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please identify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do freshman seminar instructors serve as academic advisors for students in their seminar sections? \_\_\_yes, Xno
16. How is the freshman seminar graded? \_\_\_pass/fail, Xletter grade
17. Is instructor training offered for freshman seminar instructors? Xyes, \_\_\_no
18. Is instructor training required for freshman seminar instructors? \_\_\_yes, Xno
19. If instructor training is offered, over what length of time does it occur? Three separate meeting dates (e. g. one day, two days, five days, etc.)
20. How long has the freshman seminar been offered on your campus? 14 years.
21. What freshmen are required to take the freshman seminar? \_\_\_all, \_\_\_some, Xnone.
22. If you answered 'some' to the previous question, which freshmen (by category) are required to take the freshmen seminar?
  - a. \_\_\_ Academically underprepared students
  - b. \_\_\_ Athletes
  - c. \_\_\_ Undecided students
  - d. \_\_\_ Students in particular residence hall
  - e. \_\_\_ Minority students
  - f. \_\_\_ Students within a specific major
  - g. \_\_\_ Honor students
  - h. \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
23. Are different sections of the freshman seminar offered for any of the following unique sub-populations of students? Check all that apply.
  - a. \_\_\_ Adults
  - b. \_\_\_ Minority students
  - c. \_\_\_ Commuting students
  - d. \_\_\_ Athletes
  - e. \_\_\_ Disabled students
  - f. \_\_\_ International students
  - g. \_\_\_ Students residing within a particular residence hall
  - h. \_\_\_ Women
  - i. \_\_\_ Academically underprepared students
  - j. \_\_\_ Students within a specific major
  - k. \_\_\_ Honors students
  - l. \_\_\_ Undecided students
  - m. \_\_\_ Other, please identify
24. How many total classroom contact hours (clock hours) comprise the entire freshman seminar course? 32
25. Over what length of time is the freshman seminar offered? 1 semester  
(example: six weeks, one semester)
26. Does the freshman seminar carry academic credit towards graduation? X yes, \_\_\_no

27. If yes, how many semester/quarter hours or other credits do the freshman seminar carry?
- a. \_\_\_one c. \_\_\_three  
b. Xtwo d. \_\_\_more than three
28. If the freshman seminar carries academic credit, how does such credit apply?
- a. \_\_\_toward core requirements d. \_\_\_toward major requirements  
b. \_\_\_toward general education requirements e. Xother (please describe)
29. Is the freshman seminar linked to, clustered, or paired with other courses (i. e. 'learning community approach)? \_\_\_yes Xno
30. On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), what do you believe to be the level of overall campus support (from students, faculty, staff, administration) for the freshman seminar?  
(low) \_\_\_1 X 2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 (high)

**Thank you for your response. A written report of the results will be available late Spring, 2003. For more information, call or write the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Doctoral Program for Educational Leadership, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154. Phone: Dr. Dale Anderson, (702) 895-4580. E-Mail: [danders@ccmail.nevada.edu](mailto:danders@ccmail.nevada.edu).**

**EDUCATIONAL, CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT  
EPY 101**

**Course & Instructor**

EPY 101- 08 Fall 2002  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 - 12:20  
Instructor: Anne Hein  
Classroom: CEB 203  
Office: Student Services Complex (SSC) #103 Phone: #895-0663  
Office Hours: By appointment  
E-mail address: ahein@ccmail.nevada.edu

**Course Description**

Educational, Career and Personal Development is designed to provide students with information and experiences that will improve their success rate of academic performance at the University level. This course will assist students in enhancing their critical thinking, note and test taking, reading, speaking, and writing skills, as well as provide help in developing realistic academic and career planning processes.

**Course Objectives**

1. To teach students to take initiative and be responsible for their growth and success at UNLV.
2. To prepare students for meetings with faculty/advisors and understand rationale and requirements of the core curriculum and the qualities of an educated person.
3. To help students learn about campus resources, services, and opportunities available, in an effort to promote academic and personal growth.
4. To identify and improve student skills and competencies as they relate to academic, personal, and career goals.
5. To increase the retention-rate for students and create a satisfying experience.

**Textbooks/Resources**

1. Cornerstone: Building On Your Best – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, by Sherfield, Montgomery and Moody
2. The Prentice Hall Planner for Student Success
3. 2002-2004 UNLV Undergraduate Catalog
4. 2002-2003 Student Handbook/Planner (from Orientation)

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact Learning Enhancement Services (LES) for coordination in your academic accommodations. The LES is located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex room 137. The phone number is 895-0866. (TDD 895-0652).



**Class Expectations/Participation points**

Students are expected to come to class on time, turn cell phones and beepers off, and be prepared with paper and writing instruments. Students are expected to have read assigned chapters, completed all exercises in the textbook, and come to class prepared to discuss the exercises. Students who are unprepared or late, will receive a 5 point reduction per class from the 50 total participation points. All written assignments must be typed - 5 point reduction if they are not.

**Grading Policy**

The course grade will be based upon class participation, assignments, quiz scores, in-class presentations and a career project. Point distribution for each assignment is as follows:

- Quizzes (unannounced)      7 @ 10 points each      70 points
  - (Typed) Writing/Assignments      8 @ 15 points each      120 points
  - Participation points      50 points
  - \*All students will earn these points if they come to class, participate in discussions and are not late.
  - Career Project      1 @ 50 points      50 points
  - In-Class presentations      1 @ 50 points      50 points
- 340 points

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENTAGE	POINTS
A	90-100%	306 +
A-	87-89.9%	295-305
B+	83-86.9%	282-294
B	80-82.9%	272-281
B-	77-79.9%	261-271
C+	73-76.9%	248-260
C	70-72.9%	238-247
C-	67-69.9%	227-237
D+	63-66.9%	214-226
D	60-62.9%	204-213
D-	57-59.9%	193-203
F	56.9% and below	192 and below

**\*\* Students cannot make up points for quizzes or other missed assignments. All assignments are due on Thursday of each week for which they are assigned. Late assignments are not accepted. Written assignments must be typed.**

## FALL 2002 Syllabus

**\*\*Schedule is always subject to change, please bring your syllabus to every class session to make adjustments if necessary\*\***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Chapter(s)</b>	<b>Discussion topics/Class Activities</b>	<b>Assignm ent Due Dates</b>
Aug. 27 Aug. 29		Introduction to the course Review of the syllabus Class introduction activity Transition to college	Read Chapters 1 & 2
		<b>Note: August 30<sup>th</sup> is the last day for: Adding, changing courses, paying... 100% refund deadline. See class schedule.</b>	
Sept. 3 Sept. 5	Chapter 1 Chapter 2	What is an Educated person? Values Clarification Motivation and Goal Setting	<b>Send an e-mail to Anne. What did I learn from Chapter 1? (15 pts.)</b> <a href="mailto:ahain@cmail.nevada.edu">ahain@c mail.ne vada.edu</a>
Sept. 10 Sept. 12	Chapter 3	Multiple Intelligences Your Learning Styles Personality Typing	Read Chapter 3 <b>Goal Setting Assignm ent (15 pts.)</b>
Sept. 17 Sept. 19	Chapter 4 Chapter 5	Critical and Creative Thinking Time Management	Read Chapter 4 & 5 <b>Critical Thinkin g Assignm ent (15 pts.)</b>
Sept. 24 Sept. 26	Chapter 5  Chapter 6	Priorities Procrastination Listening Skills	Read Chapter 6 <b>Time Manage ment Assignm</b>

			<b>ent (15 pts.)</b>
Oct. 1 Oct. 3		Managing Money/Financial Aid Library Tour - Meet at the Lied Library instead of classroom.	<b>Syllabus Assignment (15 pts.)</b>
		<b>Note: October 4<sup>th</sup> is the final day to withdraw from all courses and receive a 50% refund. See class schedule.</b>	
Oct. 8 Oct. 10	Chapter 7 Chapter 8	Note-taking Study Skills	Read Chapters 7 & 8 <b>Study Skills Assignment (15 pts.)</b>
Oct. 15 Oct. 17	Chapter 9	Test Taking Skills Academic Advising & Policies/Grade point averages Making faculty connections	Chapter 9 <b>Test Taking Assignment (15 pts.)</b>
Oct. 22 <b>Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup></b> <b>No class</b> Oct. 24	Chapter 10 <b>Major Exploration Fair MSU Ballroom</b> <b>Extra credit 10 pts.</b>	Writing Skills & Public Speaking  Writing Center Tour	Read Chapter 10  <b>GPA Assignment (15 pts.)</b>
Oct. 29 Oct. 31	Chapter 10	Student Presentations	<b>Student Presentations (50 pts.)</b>
		<b>November 1<sup>st</sup> - Last day to withdraw from classes or change from credit to audit...</b>	
Nov. 5 Nov. 7	Chapter 11	Relationships Personal Responsibility (Health)	Read Chapter 11
Nov. 12 Nov. 14	Chapter 12	Diversity I Diversity II	Read Chapter 12
Nov. 19 Nov. 21	Chapter 13	Personal Wellness Assertiveness Stress Management Conflict Resolution	Read Chapter 13
Nov. 26	Chapter 14	Career Development Life Planning	Read Chapter 14 <b>Career Project</b>

			<b>due (50 pts.)</b>
Nov. 28	<b>No class</b>	<b>No class</b>	
Dec. 3 Dec. 5		Getting Involved on Campus Preparing for Spring Semester	
		<b>December 9<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> Final Exam Week (See class schedule)</b>	

**EPY 101 LEGEND OF ASSIGNMENTS AND DUE DATES**

**(8 Assignments worth 15 points each) These do not include the in-class presentation and the Career Project.**

<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>DUE:</b>
1) Type a one page paper: What I learned from Chapter 1	Thursday, September 5 <sup>th</sup>
2) Turn in completed goal sheets - all parts (provided)	Thursday, September 12 <sup>th</sup>
3) Complete Critical/Creative Thinking Assignment	Thursday, September 19 <sup>th</sup>
4) Complete time management planner (Monthly schedule for the semester & Daily schedule for week of Sept. 16 <sup>th</sup> ).	Thursday, September 26 <sup>th</sup>
5) Complete syllabus assignment in planner	Thursday, October 4 <sup>th</sup>
6) Complete Study Skills Assignment	Thursday, October 10 <sup>th</sup>
7) Complete Test Taking Assignment	Thursday, October 17 <sup>th</sup>
8) Complete GPA/GPB Assignment	Thursday, October 24 <sup>th</sup>

**2000- 2001 Survey of Freshman Seminars and Student Persistence  
at WICHE Urban Universities and Colleges  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership  
4545 Maryland Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89154**

1. Name of Institution Metropolitan State College of Denver
2. City Denver 3. State CO 4. Zip Code 80217-3362
- Your Name Renee Ruderman Title Director, First Year Program
5. What is the approximate undergraduate enrollment at your institution? 19,000
6. Please indicate the type of your institution.  
☒ 4-year public  
☐ 4-year private  
☐ Other
7. What is the nature of your freshman admissions policy?  
☐ Open  
☒ Open –some programs selective  
☐ Selective  
☐ Highly selective
8. Does your institution (including any department or division) offer one or more Freshman Seminar? ☒ yes, ☐ no  

(If **yes**, please attach a current sample syllabus or course description with returned survey)

**IF YOUR INSTITUTION DID NOT OFFER A FRESHMAN SEMINAR TYPE COURSE IN FALL 2000. PLEASE DISREGARD REMAING QUESTIONS, AND RETURN SURVEY IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOP. THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**IF YOUR INSTITUTION OFFERED A FRESHMAN SEMINAR TYPE COURSE IN FALL 2000, PLEASE COMPLETE THE REMAINING SURVEY QUESTIONS.**

9. Check each discrete type of freshman seminar (a, b, c, d, e, or f) that exists on your campus.
  - a. ☒ **Extended orientation seminars.** Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival, or student success courses, these courses are taught by faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, graduate, and upper-level undergraduate students. Specific content varies widely but is likely to include an introduction to campus resources, time management, study skills, career planning, diversity, and issues common to student life.

b. X **Academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections.**

These courses may be elective or required, inter-or extra-disciplinary in focus, and will sometimes be a part of the required general education core. These courses often focus on the 'higher order' academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and argument.

c. Academic seminars on various topics. In this type of seminar, each section will consider a different topic chosen by the faculty member who is the seminar instructor. These courses may evolve from any discipline. Students generally select their first- or second-choice seminar. In this genre, class size is often restricted to no more than 15 students.

d. Professional or discipline-based seminars. These seminars may be offered in any academic department or professional school (engineering, nursing, agriculture) and are designed to give students a basic introduction to the academic expectations and professional applications of the major.

e. Basic study skills seminars. These seminars provide some degree of remediation for students who are academically unprepared and focus on the most basic study skills such as reading, dictionary use, note-taking, and basic writing" (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996).

f. Other (Please describe in detail)

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Please note:

**IF YOU HAVE CHECKED MORE THAN ONE FRESHMAN SUCCESS COURSE TYPE, SELECT THE TYPE (a, b, c, d, e, or f) WITH THE HIGHEST TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ANSWER SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR THAT SEMINAR ONLY.**

10. I am answering remaining questions for seminar a, X b, c, d, e, f

11. In your opinion, what are three primary goals of your freshman success program?

To integrate students into the higher education system

To study. Through critical writing reading Thinking, a variety of texts from various disciplines

To support first-year students' success Through campus resources, support systems.

12. If your course has a common curriculum across sections, what, in your opinion, are the most important topics that comprise the content of the freshman seminar? (List up to 5 topics.)

The American Dream

The Myth of The American Family



Higher Education, Gender, racial myths.

13. What is the maximum number of students allowed to enroll in each freshman seminar section? 25
14. Who teaches the freshman seminar? (Check all that apply.)
- a. ☒ Faculty/Adjunct Faculty
  - b. ☒ Student affairs professionals
  - c. ☒ Other campus administrators
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Upper-level undergraduate students
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate students
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please identify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do freshman seminar instructors serve as academic advisors for students in their seminar sections? ☒ yes, \_\_\_\_\_ no *sometimes, if we have stipends to pay them*
16. How is the freshman seminar graded? \_\_\_\_\_ pass/fail, ☒ letter grade
17. Is instructor training offered for freshman seminar instructors? ☒ yes, \_\_\_\_\_ no
18. Is instructor training required for freshman seminar instructors? ☒ yes, \_\_\_\_\_ no
19. If instructor training is offered, over what length of time does it occur? one day  
(e. g. one day, two days, five days, etc.)
20. How long has the freshman seminar been offered on your campus? 19 years.
21. What freshmen are required to take the freshman seminar? \_\_\_\_\_ all, ☒ some, \_\_\_\_\_ none.
22. If you answered 'some' to the previous question, which freshmen (by category) are required to take the freshmen seminar?
- a. ☒ Academically underprepared students
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Athletes
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Undecided students
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Students in particular residence hall
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Minority students
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Students within a specific major
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ Honor students
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
23. Are different sections of the freshman seminar offered for any of the following unique sub-populations of students? Check all that apply.
- a. \_\_\_\_\_ Adults
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Minority students
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Commuting students
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Athletes
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Disabled students
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ International students
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ Students residing within a particular residence hall
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_ Women
  - i. ☒ Academically underprepared students
  - j. \_\_\_\_\_ Students within a specific major
  - k. ☒ Honors students
  - l. \_\_\_\_\_ Undecided students
  - m. \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please identify \_\_\_\_\_
24. How many total classroom contact hours (clock hours) comprise the entire freshman seminar course? 45 semester hours

25. Over what length of time is the freshman seminar offered? one 15 week semester each semester - summer too - 6-8 week semesters (example: six weeks, one semester)
26. Does the freshman seminar carry academic credit towards graduation? X yes, \_\_\_ no
27. If yes, how many semester/quarter hours or other credits does the freshman seminar carry?
- |            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| a. ___ one | c. <u>X</u> three      |
| b. ___ two | d. ___ more than three |
28. If the freshman seminar carries academic credit, how does such credit apply?
- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. ___ toward core requirements                   | d. ___ toward major requirements |
| b. <u>X</u> toward general education requirements | e. ___ other (please describe)   |
29. Is the freshman seminar linked to, clustered, or paired with other courses (i. E. 'learning community approach)? X yes \_\_\_ no (*sometimes we've done this*)
30. On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), what do you believe to be the level of overall campus support (from students, faculty, staff, administration) for the freshman seminar?
- (low) \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 X 5 (high)

Thank you for your response. A written report of the results will be available late Spring, 2003. For more information, call or write the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Doctoral Program for Educational Leadership, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154. Phone: Dr. Dale Anderson, (702) 895-4580. E-Mail: [danders@ccmail.nevada.edu](mailto:danders@ccmail.nevada.edu).

## First Year Seminar – English 1190

**Spring 2003**

Renee Ruderman, Assistant Professor of English and Director, First Year Program and  
Paul DeMarte, First Year Program Assistant, Anthropology major

Office – KC 420; English Department

Phone – 303 –556-8477; or for urgent messages 303-556-3211

Office Hours – MW 11:30-1:00pm; F 11:30-12:30, and by appointment

e-mail: [rudermar@mscd.edu](mailto:rudermar@mscd.edu)

**What to expect:** The First Seminar thrives on the interaction of students with each other and the instructor; therefore, **your contributions to the class are vitally important.** I have selected valuable, current and sometimes controversial materials for discussion, but I appreciate class suggestions about what to read, write, and do in the college community. We'll have weekly reading and writing experiences, all of which will be evaluated. Guest lectures, visits, in and out-of-class activities and videos are also part of this course. You may also be involved in a community Service project. Details will follow.

**Absences:** Metro's College Catalog states that all students are expected to attend all classes. You will be permitted to miss **three classes** before your **final grade is negatively affected.** That is, if, for example, you miss four classes and your final grade would have been a B, it will be lowered to a C.

**N.C. Policy:** Once we have gone over the N.C. Policy in class, you are responsible for utilizing it properly, should it become necessary to do so. The last day to withdraw and receive an N.C. without faculty signature is: February 17, 2003 by 5:00 p.m. The last day to withdraw and receive an N.C. with faculty signature is: March 25, 2003 by 5:00 p.m.

**Required Reading Materials (Title, Author, Publisher, Copyright Date):** *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*, Columbo, Cullen and Lisle, the latest edition, the 5<sup>th</sup>, Bedford St./Martin's Boston, 2001.

Recommended: *Easy Writer, A Pocket Guide*, Lunsford and Connors, St. Martin's New York, 1997.

### **Specific (Measurable) Student Behavioral Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. use critical thinking in order to write clear, honest papers in reaction to readings and discussions;
2. apply critical reading techniques, analyzing meaning.
3. Record carefully, gathering details;
4. Locate information, data, sources, from the library and the internet;
5. Prepare and write papers incorporating research as substantiation for personal viewpoints;
6. Apply decision making skills based upon adequate information;
7. Practice group consensus;
8. Operate actively, effectively and cooperatively in groups;
9. Value, gain awareness and respect for other cultures;
10. Assess and solve problems;
11. Identify and clarify values;

12. Recognize and become involved with and integrated into the college classroom and campus.

**Requirements:**

1. You will be expected to write **four formal papers**, one polished poem, one requiring research, and two reviews of campus events.
2. You will be expected to write informal reaction papers and other written assignments in public journal format as well as on the internet.
3. You will be expected to **read all the required reading on time**, and be prepared to discuss it.
4. You will be expected to participate in all discussions, workshops and activities.
5. You will be expected to take a final exam, and, time permitting, a midterm exam.
6. You will be expected to attend class on time, that is, arrive on time, not leave the classroom during class and not leave early.

**Events:** Since this is an inter-institutional campus, many events take place here on a daily basis. Your peer educator, my assistant, and I will make you aware of many of these and expect you to attend TWO events-anything from a play to a history lecture, to a baseball game or a dance-during the semester. I also will ask you to write reviews/critiques of these events, due at various points during the semester.

**Suggested format for Reviews:** (Two events)

1. Who, What, Where, When, Why
2. Overview or summary of the event (details)
3. Evaluate/Critique the event ( the main part of the paper)
4. Make recommendations

(Detailed information about these assignments will be given to you in a handout.)

**Class Attendance on Religious Holidays:** See attached policy.

**Students with Disabilities:** See attached policy.

**Evaluation of Student Performance:**

Written Work including Journals.....	55%
Community Service.....	5%
Class participation.....	30%
Final.....	10%

\*Class participation includes how often and well you respond in class, as well as attendance. In addition, participation will also include your **attitude** toward learning and one another, the **effort** you put into the work of this class, and the **improvement** you demonstrate over the course of the semester.

First Year Seminar – ENG 1190 – A Course in Critical Thinking

**Detailed Outline of course content:** All the readings are from *Rereading America: Cultural contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (or Latest Edition), Columbo, Cullen and Lisle, unless they are printed handouts.

**Money and Success: The Myth of Individual Opportunity**

**Weeks 1-4 January 22-February 12**

**Introductions**

- A. Discuss: Definitions of the American Dream and the value of it
- B. Readings: “Class Poem: by Aurora Levins Morales, (a handout); “Class in America: Myths and Realities” by Gregory Mantsios, 318; “The Lesson” by Toni Cade Bambara, 394; “From Seven Floors up” by Sharon Olds, 371.
- C. Possible Assignment: Write a poem detailing the American Dream, based on either the Morales or Olds poem; journals. See handout.
- D. Application/Activity: Group exercises, written work including an introduction to the journal, guest speaker(s).

**Harmony at Home: The Myth of the Model Family**

**Weeks 5-6 February 17-26**

- A. Discuss: The forms and functions of the family, dysfunction
- B. Readings: “A Family Tree: Freedom from Want; Freedom from Fear” by Norman Rockwell, 21; “Looking for Work” by Gary Soto, 39, “What Makes a Family?” by E. F. Graff, 26 and “The Military-Nintendo complex” by John Naisbitt et.al., 81; “Rite of Passage” by Sharon Olds (a handout).
- C. Possible Assignment: A Research Report on issues related to the American Family; journals.
- D. Application/Activity: Introduction to the Library; computer accounts; research, collaborative activities.

**Learning Power: The Myth of Education and Empowerment**

**Weeks 7-9 March 3-19**

- A. Discuss: American systems of education; how one is educated; how does one recognize good education?
- B. Readings: “The Achievement of Desire: by Rodriguez, 194; “Learning to Read” by Malcom X, 223; From “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of work: by Jean Anyon, 174; (“Talking to the Owls and Butterflies,” by Lane Deer and Eroles, a handout) – time-permitting.
- C. Possible Assignment: Write an account of one’s education; journals
- D. Application/Activity: Video, guest lecture

**Spring Break March 24-28**

### **Created Equal: The Myth of the Melting Pot**

**Weeks 10-12 – March 31-April 16**

(Career Services Segment – In this section of The First Year Seminar, Career Services;Staff make a presentation)

- A. Discuss: Definitions of Discrimination, Prejudice, Racism, Stereotyping, Multiculturalism
- B. Readings: “Causes of Prejudice” by Vincent Parrillo, 548; “Secret Latina at Large” by Veronica Chambers, 653; “Let America Be America Again by Langston Hughes, 545; “Los Vendidos” a play by Valdez, (a handout)
- C. Possible Assignment: Write: Personal experiences with discrimination, prejudice and racism; journals
- D. Application/Activity: A play reading; guest speaker; video

### **Westward Ho! The Myth of Frontier Freedom**

**Weeks 15 May 5-7**

- A. Discuss: The concept of freedom
- B. Readings: “The Twilight of Self-Reliance: Frontier Values and Contemporary America” by Wallace Stegner, 694; “The Price of Admission: Harassment and Free Speech in the Wild, Wild West” by Stephanie Brail, 777; “Department of the Interior by Linda Hogan, 826.
- C. Possible Assignment: Write about Living in Democracy; Reviews of an On-Campus Activity
- D. Application/Activity: Guest speaker

Exam week May 12-17; No classes, just exams

**CLASS ATTENDANCE  
ON  
RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY POLICY**

1. Students a Metropolitan State College of Denver “MSCD” who because of their sincerely held religious beliefs are unable to attend classes, take examination, participate in graded activities or submit graded assignments on particular days shall, without penalty, be excused from such classes and be given meaningful opportunity to make up such examinations and graded activities or assignments provided that advance written notice that the students will be absent for religious reasons is given to faculty members during the first two weeks of the semester.
2. Nothing in paragraph one of this class policy shall require MSCD faculty members to rescheduled classes, repeat lectures or other ungraded activities or provide ungraded individualized instruction solely for the benefit of the students who, for religious reasons, are unable to attend regularly scheduled classes or activities. However, presentations, critiques, conferences and similar activities involving individual students shall be scheduled to avoid conflicts with such students’ religious observances or holidays provided that reasonable advance notice of scheduling conflicts is given to faculty members.
3. Because classroom attendance and participation is an important aspect of learning, MSCD students should not register for courses if regularly scheduled classes or activities routinely conflict with their religious observances or holidays (e.g., conflicts resulting in weekly absences for an entire semester.)
4. Any MSCD student who believes that an MSCD faculty member has violated this policy is entitled to seek relief under section VII of the MSCD Affirmative Action Plan.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

“Students desiring a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act must contact the instructor immediately to discuss their needs, Failure to notify the instructor, in a timely manner, of the need for a reasonable accommodation may hinder the college’s ability to assist students in successfully completing the course.”

Metropolitan State College of Denver  
Department of English

**Dates/Deadlines Spring Semester 2003**

Here are a few important dates and deadlines that you may want to note for your students.

Full semester classes begin	Tuesday, January 21, 2003
Deadline for Spring 2003 Graduation Card return (to Registrar)	Friday, January 31, 2003
Last day to drop class with 100% refund	5 P.M., Monday, January 27, 2003
Last day to drop class and have deleted from academic Record, with 50% refund	Wednesday, February 5, 2003
Last day to withdraw ("NC") WITHOUT faculty signature	5 P.M., Monday, February 17, 2003
Last day to withdraw ("NC") FACULTY SIGNATURE REQUIRED	5 P.M., Monday, March 31, 2003
Student Evaluations (2 Weeks)	April 14-26, 2003
Spring Break (no classes/college offices open)	Monday – Saturday, March 24 – 29, 2003
Spring 2003 classes end	Saturday, May 10, 2003
Final Exam Week	Monday – Saturday, May 12 – 17, 2003
Final Grades due to CN 105	10 A.M., Thursday, May 22, 2003
Grades available by phone, web & kiosk	Friday, May 23, 2003



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