Millennium Scholarship Program Hispanic persisters and Hispanic non-Msp persisters

Arlie J Stops
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

HISPANIC PERSISTERS AND
HISPANIC NON-MSP PERSISTERS

by

Arlie J. Stops

Bachelor of Arts
University of Montana
1978

Masters of Arts
New Mexico State University
1981

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

Graduate College
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Entitled

Millennium Scholarship Program Hispanic Persisters And Hispanic Non-MSP Persisters

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

[Signatures of Examination Committee Chair and Dean of the Graduate College]

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ABSTRACT

Millennium Scholarship Program Hispanic Persisters and Hispanic Non-MSP Persisters

by

Arlie J. Stops

Dr. Paul E. Meacham, Ph.D., Examination Committee Chair
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The Hispanic component of the student body at the Community College of Southern Nevada was the primary focus of this study, which spanned a three-year period of time. Statistics regarding the enrollment and academic success of Hispanic students were collected and analyzed. Particular attention was given to the impact of the state of Nevada’s recent Millennium Scholarship Program (MSP) on the Hispanic student population. Enrollment and success of Hispanic students were secondarily compared to that of other student ethnic components.

The study, which followed two cohorts of students, found that Hispanic students in both cohorts who participated in the MSP persisted at higher rates than Hispanic students who were not participants in the MSP. Hispanic MSP students were additionally found to persist at higher rates than African Americans and Asian MSP students.
Significant findings of this study involved Hispanic MSP student enrollment into non-occupational courses, the enrollment of Hispanic MSP students into non-occupational courses by gender, and Hispanic MSP student enrollment into non-occupational courses as compared to Hispanic non-MSP students. Significance was also found between Hispanic MSP and other minority MSP students in regard to enrollment into non-occupational courses. The first and last semester grade point averages of Hispanic MSP students versus Hispanic non-MSP students was significant for both cohorts.
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Last, this effort and my life is dedicated to my mother, Ernestine Bravo Stops, who did not live to see its completion. I promised it to her, and here it is.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is a disappointment that, in general, the media reports on education reform lack an emphasis on learning incentives and learner motivation. Meanwhile, almost half of the Hispanic high school students in the country drop out before graduating from high school. This is more than double the rate of African American students and three times the rate of Caucasian students. Forty percent of Hispanic dropouts never complete the tenth grade (Parnell, 1985). The National Commission on Secondary Schooling for Hispanics had stated almost twenty years ago that “…the high drop out rate is a failure of the education system which has not met the aspirations and special needs of its growing Hispanic population”. The commission also expressed its concern about the programs that were available and stated that it “…blames curricula that fail to address the vocational needs of students, the lack of adequate counseling and support services, low expectations, and the strength of the work ethic among Hispanic men” (as cited in Parnell, 1985, p. 9).

As the Hispanic population increases faster than any ethnic group in the United States, “…Latinos’ success at entering and graduating from college affects not only their own well-being but also the nation’s well-being…the vitality of the U.S. work force increasingly depends on Hispanic educational progress” (Fry, 2002, p. 1).
Additionally, it has been projected that the number of Hispanics who will be seeking employment in American business and industry in the next twenty years may number as many as 18 million (Fry, 2002). Although this projection suggests there will be job openings, the educational level of Hispanics may fall short of job criteria and educational preparedness. Hispanic college students do enroll into college courses, but many of these students do not persist until graduation (Fry, 2002).

In 1999 the Nevada Legislature enacted a law creating the Millennium Scholarship Program (MSP). Its purpose was to increase the “go to college” rate of Nevadans who graduated from high school with at least a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA). The first class of Millennium Scholar graduates was from the class of 2000 with 7,185 students eligible statewide (Office of the State, 2000). Of these high school graduates 4,270 enrolled for college classes at Nevada higher education institutions in the Fall 2000 semester (Office of the State, 2001).

An ethnic breakdown of those who were eligible was completed. According to the Millennium Scholarship Baseline Study Report (Office of the State Treasurer, 2003), Hispanics comprised 14.3%, and Caucasians comprised 70%. Other ethnicities were each reported as less than 10%; the exact percentages of African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans were not provided in the report. Out of the 4,270 graduates, 908 (21%) of Millennium Scholarship qualifiers enrolled at the Community College of Southern Nevada (CCSN) in Las Vegas, Nevada (J. Bearce, personal communication, June 27, 2003).
Statement of the Problem

The following figures conveyed the low percentages of Hispanic student persisters and completers at CCSN at the start of the 1998-1999 academic year. Hispanics comprised 14% of the CCSN student body, yet only 4% of CCSN’s graduating class of 1999 was Hispanic. In 2000 Las Vegas high schools produced 2,100 Hispanic graduates. In the Fall 2000 semester, 300 of those graduates were enrolled at CCSN. In the Fall 2000 semester, the overall Hispanic enrollment at CCSN was 14% of the student body. In the Spring 2001 semester only 5% of CCSN’s graduates were Hispanic (J. Bearce, personal communication, April 4, 2001). Conventional explanations for Hispanic students’ collective failure to persist and graduate included lack of motivation, lack of preparation, and lack of support. However, little attention had been given to Hispanic students who were motivated, prepared, and supported.

CCSN provided student services such as assessment, advising, career and academic counseling, and financial assistance. It also offered academic support services such as the Tutorial Center, the Writing Assistance Lab, the Computer and Online Research Lab, and the campus libraries.

One purpose of the MSP was to attract Nevada’s high school graduates to continue their schooling at a Nevada college or university and persist in the pursuit of their higher education. Since CCSN has main campuses located in the cities of Las Vegas and Henderson with an estimated 20-25% Hispanic population, this researcher questioned the persistence of Hispanics in the MSP compared to Hispanics not in the MSP. CCSN’s MSP, therefore, was very important, but was it effective? If it was not
effective, then changes would have to be made in the execution of the MSP so that Hispanic students would have excellent opportunities to achieve success. If it was effective, then the MSP was on track and could possibly be enhanced with additional support features.

Some State Scholarship Programs

The MSP in Nevada began statewide in the Fall 2000 semester. The program completed its pilot year in May 2001 at the close of the spring semester. MSP is modeled after similar efforts in other states. The scholarship programs in New Mexico and Georgia were reviewed by this researcher in order to have a basis of comparison as well as more depth of knowledge.

New Mexico Lottery Scholarship. Since 1996 the New Mexico Lottery Scholarship Program has functioned on a budget of $9.8 million. Each recipient of this scholarship was required to meet the criteria which included: being a resident of New Mexico who had graduated from a New Mexico high school; was attending a New Mexico university or community college; was enrolled full-time; and maintained a 2.5 GPA. In the fall of 2000 more than 10,000 New Mexicans received this scholarship (Binder, Ganderton, and Hutchens, 2002).

Georgia HOPE Scholarship. Since 1991 the Georgia HOPE Scholarship Program has functioned on an annual budget of $360 million. The criteria for this scholarship required recipients to: be a Georgia resident; be a high school graduate since 1993; be enrolled full-time; and keep a GPA minimum of 2.5. By the fall of 2000 more than 588,000 Georgians received this scholarship (Dynarski, 2002).
Nevada Millennium Scholarship. Since 2000 the Nevada MSP had functioned on an annual budget of $21 million. The criteria for this scholarship were that the recipient: be a Nevada resident; be a high school graduate with at least a 3.0 GPA; be enrolled full-time or part-time at a community college or four-year college or university; and maintain a 2.5 GPA. In the fall of 2000 more than 4,000 Nevadans received this scholarship (Office of the State, 2002).

Conceptual Framework

The number of Hispanic students attending U.S. community colleges showed a slow increase in the 1990s. By the end of that decade, Hispanics accounted for approximately 10% of all community college and 4-year college students. These students were surpassed by Asian college students at slightly over 11%, but they were ahead of African American college students who were enrolled at approximately 7% (Fry, 2002).

Even though Hispanics comprised more than 13% of the U.S. population, they were not proportionately represented in U.S. community colleges. Within the general population of Las Vegas, for instance, the Hispanic population is 19%, and the CCSN Hispanic student population is below that at 16% (J. Bearce, personal communication, April 4, 2001). It may be possible for the lower-than-expected Hispanic student enrollment to be explained by looking at the beliefs and traditions within the Hispanic culture.

Victor Vroom developed the Expectancy Theory by which he believed that “…felt needs cause behavior, and this motivated behavior in a work setting is
increased if a person perceives a positive relationship between effort and performance” (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, 2001, p. 33; Bank and Biddle, 1992). Vroom believed that motivated behavior is increased if there is a positive relationship between good performance and outcomes and rewards. This theory can be tested against the proposed study of groups of Hispanics in the MSP. If the work ethic of Hispanics is a strong factor in their persistence or non-persistence at CCSN, one contributing factor may be the Expectancy Theory. For example, if the MSP Hispanic students perceived that a strong academic performance in college resulted in a high paying position in the future, then they may raise their willingness to succeed and to work harder in order to increase their confidence level. If Vroom’s theory, which stated that there was a link between effort and performance as well as between performance and valued outcomes, held in regard to this research study, then the Hispanic MSP students will achieve academic success once each had clarified his/her academic and career goals, prioritized them, and made a personal commitment to pursue those goals.

What might account for differences between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics who have similar high school GPAs? It may be assumed that MSP students were motivated, smart, and had support. Since the MSP students were regarded as high-ability students, they, therefore, would be expected to persist.

It is likely that many of CCSN’s Hispanic students were competing to succeed against the traditional holdings of their cultures. These holdings may include the expectation of young adults to work in order to augment the family income, if necessary, and to postpone or forfeit college in such cases. If families and peers did
not value education, then Hispanic students needed to look elsewhere to find support, encouragement, and assistance. "The value placed on a college education, however, is highest among those who have the lowest rates of college participation: African American and Hispanic parents are more likely to emphasize higher education than either white parents or the population as a whole" (Public Agenda, 2000, ¶6). Fry (2002) also wrote that Hispanic families value and support a college education. Besides family, another place that they most likely looked was the MSP since it was marketed to them prior to high school graduation by CCSN’s Recruitment Office as well as by the counselors in the high schools.

Research Questions

This study examined and compared semester-to-semester persistence, course taking behavior, and GPA performance of Hispanic MSP student and regularly enrolled Hispanic students at CCSN from the 2000-2001 and the 2001-2002 academic years. The researcher had found that little attention had been given to Hispanic students who were motivated, prepared, and supported in regard to their post-secondary education.

1. How does year-to-year persistence of full-time MSP Hispanics compare with non-MSP Hispanics during the first year of each cohort?

2. How does course taking differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics?

3. How does course work performance (GPA) differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the first and last semester grade point averages of MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics in the study?

5. Is there a statistically significant difference in persistence in regard to: a.) MSP Hispanic males and females compared to non-MSP Hispanic students of both genders; b.) MSP Hispanic males to non-MSP Hispanic males; c.) MSP Hispanic females to non-MSP Hispanic females?

Research Design and Methodology

This ex post facto comparative-descriptive study compared variables associated with persistence and non-persistence. The analysis included descriptive statistics of the sample and made comparisons within the existing Hispanic MSP and non-MSP Hispanic students as well as explored relationships in the data through cross-tabulations. Chi-square tests were used to look at the relationships among variables. If the relationships indicated further analysis, a one-tailed ANOVA was used to determine differences in the means between groups. Existing data maintained in CCSN and UCCSN databases were utilized in this study along with reports that were generated in and distributed from Nevada’s Office of the State Treasurer.

Significance of the Study

Students are the lifeblood of CCSN. Therefore, each student’s success and ultimate completion of an academic, transfer, or vocational program is important to the college. This study, then is highly significant to the college for two reasons.
First, the results of this study should guide the college in improving the MSP. Improvements may take the form of taking preparatory steps for college and assistance in the form of academic support services and/or student services. All college-offered services and assistance efforts addressed the second reason which was to foster success in the Hispanic MSP students in regard to sound career choices, improved grades, and a reduction in their overall attrition rate.

Limitations

This study was restricted to the MSP at CCSN. Furthermore, only full-time students, both participants and non-participants of the MSP who were students during the three academic years from Fall 2000 through Spring 2003 were studied. This study assumed that all of the MSP students were successful high school graduates who had completed all of their high school requirements with a GPA of at least 3.0, and who had passed the High School Proficiency Exam. It was also assumed that all MSP students were self-motivators and came from families that strongly supported education. This last assumption was based on information given in a national study titled No More Excuses. The report of this study stated, “...large-scale national studies and targeted research show that, contrary to stereotypes, Hispanic parents and families highly value learning and seek to effectively support their children in school” (The Final Report, 1998, p. 12). Hispanic families do value education; however, there are many factors that can contribute to the dropping out of students. This was supported by Larson’s 1995 report on dropout prevention which
found that Hispanic parents were open to suggestions about becoming more involved in their children's academic success (as cited in The Final Report, 1998).

Definitions

The definitions of key elements as they pertained to this study follow:

AA – African American

Academic/non-occupational course – a course which can be used for an
Associate of Arts Degree or for transfer to a university

AM – American Indian

AS – Asian

CAU - Caucasian

Full-time student – A student who is enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours in a given semester

Grade Point Average (GPA) – This cumulative rendering of a student’s academic standing based on CCSN’s grading system in which a 4.0 indicates a “straight A” grade average

HI – Hispanic

Hispanic – Self-identified by the student; Latinos, Chicanos, Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans are usually included in this group

Hope Grant – not merit-based; only requires high school graduation; used at schools that offer 2-year programs or less

Hope Scholarship – merit-based; requires “B” average to be eligible; based upon “core courses”
Merit – requirement of “B” average in high school courses

MSP – Millennium Scholarship Program

New Mexico Lottery Scholarship – also known as New Mexico Success Scholarship; high school graduation is sole requirement

Non-Millennium – used to describe Hispanic or other ethnicities that were not in the Millennium Scholarship Program

Occupational/vocational course – a course that prepares students to enter the workforce with a certificate or an Associate of Applied Science Degree

Persistence – Semester-to-semester full-time status enrollment and maintenance of a GPA of 2.0 or better each semester along with continual enrollment

Summary

Hispanic high school students nationwide have shown a high attrition rate. In an effort to address the overall low go-to-college rate in the state of Nevada, the MSP was created. The intent of this program was to encourage the Nevada high school graduate bearing a 3.0 GPA or higher to enroll in a college or university within the state.

Although the program is well-intentioned, there is the possibility that it is not accomplishing its original goal. This study, therefore, was designed to determine the level of success that has been attained by the MSP, specifically in regard to the Hispanic student at CCSN.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hispanics in the United States

In April, 1995, U.S. President Bill Clinton gave a speech at a commemorative service in which he stated,

...let's not forget that we also have an educational deficit. Education is the fault line in America today; those who have it are doing well in the global economy, those who don't are doing not as well. We cannot walk away from this fundamental fact. The American dream will succeed or fail in the 21st Century in direct proportion to our commitment to educate every person in the United States of America. ("Who Are," 1996, inset below ¶ 3)

This remark by Clinton becomes more poignant when considering that Hispanics – the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States today – are also projected to become the country's largest minority cluster by the year 2050. Current figures show that Hispanic children under five years of age account for 11% of all Hispanic Americans living in the United States while 33% are below fifteen years of age. This poses an extraordinary challenge to the American educational system. The U.S. Bureau of Census projected that Hispanic students ranging from eighteen years of age down to five years of age will number approximately 16 million by the year
2030, totaling more than 25% of the entire national high school population (as cited in “Who Are,” 1996). It was not surprising, therefore, when Hispanics became California’s public schools’ largest ethnic minority population in the 2001-2002 academic year; Hispanic boys and girls comprised 44.2% of the student population (National Council of La Raza, 2003).

While approximately 64% of today’s Hispanic Americans residing in the country are U.S. born citizens, they are far from being a homogeneous group (“Who Are,” 1996). Hispanics show marked differences in socioeconomic background, country of origin, motive for migrating to the United States, English language proficiency, educational attitudes, and academic attainment levels. Unfortunately, most Hispanics remain poor, unskilled and disconnected from higher education. No attempt has even been made to establish an educational system for Hispanics comparable to that of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). In actuality, Hispanic students have been attending both rural and urban schools that lack the necessary resources to adequately meet their particular needs, even when providing an excellent education (“Who Are,” 1996).

According to U.S. Census figures, the three largest Hispanic sub-groups in the country are the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Americans. Added to these three main groups are significant numbers of immigrants coming from Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Ecuador, Bolivia, Honduras, Columbia, Nicaragua, Peru, and the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries (“Who Are”, 1996). Puerto Ricans comprise the third largest Hispanic population segment in the United States. Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898 after Spain lost the Spanish-
American War to the U.S. Through the Jones Act, American citizenship was granted to residents of that island in 1917. Since that time Puerto Ricans travel freely between the continental U.S. and the isle of Puerto Rico. Spanish is the official tongue as well as the language used in classrooms in Puerto Rico. English is taught as a second language in grades one through twelve, and it is a required school subject. “Today, 2.7 million Puerto Ricans are living in the U.S. and more than 3.7 million live on the island” (“Who Are”, 1996, ¶6).

In contrast, Cuban Americans are the second largest Hispanic subgroup in the U.S. After the 1959 revolution, a mass exodus of Cubans to America ensued; this brought highly educated immigrants from the technical, entrepreneurial, and professional strata of Cuba. Since the midpoint of the 1960s, though, Cuban Americans were less educated than the Cubans in the initial migration (“Who Are”, 1996).

The largest migration to America of a Hispanic group came from Mexico in more recent years. In 1970 the Mexican American population was less than 800,000 as compared to nearly 8 million in the year 2000. The population is highly concentrated; approximately 73% live in the five states of California, New York, Florida, Illinois, and Texas (Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities, 2002).

Among Mexican Americans (both U.S. born and immigrant Mexicans), however, 37% of adults have not completed high school as compared to only 13% of the general U.S. population (“Who Are,” 1996). In other words, the 8.3 million non-Hispanic, native born workers who are 18 years of age or older are working full time without a high school diploma along with the other 3.4 million native born non-high
school graduates who are working part-time; these people are in direct competition with the 4.8 million who are comprised of the unskilled Mexican Americans coupled with the immigrant Mexican high school dropouts.

This underclass of Mexican Americans has inevitably increased the supply of unskilled workers to a market that – by all measures – has been shrinking. The number of jobs available to unskilled workers has declined by 400,000 since 1990. In the meantime, wages of high school dropouts who work full time declined 7.2% in the 1990s while actual wages for skilled workers increased. Therefore, the argument alleging that there is a need to satisfy a shortage of unskilled workers in the U.S. with Mexican migrants is misleading. Conversely, native born non-Hispanic skilled workers need to fear competition from Mexican immigrants. The Center for Immigration Studies reported that almost 10% of all Hispanic high school dropouts in the U.S. labor force were born in the U.S. while approximately 65% of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. workforce does not have a high school diploma (Camarota, 2001).

Research on Hispanic poverty rates, welfare use, lack of health insurance coverage and related fiscal costs linked to them all support the notion of deficient education as the root of their impoverished conditions. Since trends show a decline in the demand for unskilled jobs and increases in better-paid skilled employment areas, the obvious approach would be to improve Hispanic Americans’ access to post-secondary education and their subsequent attainment of 2-year or 4-year degrees. Educational gains for Hispanic Americans will reflect heavily on their expected future incomes, type of jobs held, and socioeconomic status. “Clearly, the
success of the millions of Mexican immigrants and children who now live in the United States is important not only to their future but also to the future of the country as a whole” (Camarota, 2001, p.8).

Hispanics in Higher Education

A report by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans contains documents on the current educational status of Hispanic students (Fry, 2002). Hispanic students' achievements are still realized in spite of barriers such as familial poverty level, limited proficiency in English, nonattendance in preschool and enrollment at lower quality elementary and high schools.

Seventeen year old Hispanic students who took the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) had an average score that fell below the average of the Caucasian students who took the same tests in the areas of mathematics, reading and science (ERIC, 2001). In addition, Hispanic students showed a tendency to enroll in and complete courses in computer science, foreign languages, and English more than any other ethnic group. This resulted in a lower enrollment in courses such as science, mathematics, and history than their classmates who were of other ethnicities.

Hispanic high school students were approximately three times as apt as Caucasians to take advanced placement (AP) examinations in a foreign language (Spanish, for example) for college credit. Caucasian students, however, were likelier to take AP examinations in all other subject areas than Hispanic and African American students. Also, Hispanic students comprised only 35% of students enrolled
in preparatory programs for college that were recommended for access to technical schools or to 4-year colleges; in comparison, 50% of Caucasian and 43% of African Americans enrolled into college preparatory programs (ERIC, 2001).

Fifty percent of Hispanic high school students were more likely to be enrolled into general courses that met nothing more than the general basic requirements. In contrast, only 39% of Caucasian and 40% of African American students selected general requirement courses (ERIC, 2001).

When it came to completing high school, Hispanic students had the lowest rate in the United States. The rate for Hispanic high school completers was consistently around 63% year after year, but African Americans and Caucasians tended to complete high school at the rates of 81% and 90% respectively. The Hispanic students had the highest dropout rate in the nation when compared to students of other ethnicities. For the year 1998 Caucasians comprised 8% of high school dropouts while African Americans accounted for 14%. Sadly, the high school dropout rate for Hispanics was 30%. Almost twice as many Hispanic immigrants (44%) dropped out of high school than did Hispanic students who were born in the U.S. (21%). The immigrant student rate greatly impacts the overall high school dropout rate for Hispanic students in general (ERIC, 2001).

Regardless of ethnic heritage, the completion of high school by parents is a critical consideration when projecting the educational success of their children. From 1972 to 1997 Hispanic parents raised their rate for completion of high school from 23% to 45%. Even though Hispanic parents have made considerable gains in
completing high schools themselves, they complete at only half of the 90% rate of the Caucasian parents (ERIC, 2001).

Hispanic students today comprise approximately 10% of the higher education student body nationwide. In regard to the traditional age of college students, Hispanics account for approximately 14.5%; this rate is expected to increase to about 22% by the year 2025 (ERIC, 2001).

After high school graduation the three major ethnic groups are represented quite similarly when it comes to continuing their educations and enrolling immediately into college; these statistics are 68% for Caucasians, 66% for Hispanics and 60% for African Americans. As promising as these rates look, they digress over time, and the graduation rates for these ethnic groups whittle down to approximately 46% for Caucasians and 40% for African Americans followed by 36% for Hispanics. When the college choices of these three groups were scrutinized, it was found that over half of African American and Caucasian undergraduates, 51% and 56% respectively, chose to attend 4-year colleges while over half of Hispanic students (53%) chose to enroll into 2-year institutions (ERIC, 2001).

The number of courses that were carried varied also. Almost half (45%) of Hispanic students were attending college on a part-time basis whereas 40% of African American students and 39% of Caucasian students were doing likewise. Additionally, more Hispanic students (35%) tended to take six years to attain their bachelor degrees in comparison to only 32% of African American students and 25% of Caucasian students. National figures indicated that Hispanics graduates account for only 7% of the total of associate degrees and only 5% of the total of bachelor
degrees nationwide. Their top three choices for associate degrees were business, liberal arts and health careers; for bachelor degrees their three major choices were education, business and social services (ERIC, 2001).

Surprisingly, Hispanic students tended to seek less financial assistance by “borrowing” to pay for their college educations than did students of other ethnicities. However, almost half of freshman Hispanic students utilized grants to pay college expenses (ERIC, 2001).

The figures in the paragraphs above indicate that Hispanic college students tended to enroll in 2-year colleges more frequently than 4-year institution. Additionally, bachelor degrees have been conferred on a small percentage of Hispanic students. It was indicated that these Hispanic students usually take six years - on the average - to complete their 4-year bachelor’s degrees.

Responses to College Access and Retention

Issues for Hispanics

In an article by Brawer (1996), several studies were discussed that supported the urgent need to increase the educational attainment of Hispanics in this country and thus effectively impact their economic potential. Access to post-secondary educational programs and retention in those programs become vital factors in the equation for success. For example, a study conducted by Feldman (1993) found that full-time attendance in college was the most prevalent characteristic among those labeled as persisters, which was defined as those who graduated (as cited in Brawer, 1996). Price (1993) was in concurrence with Feldman; they were both supported by
Moore (1955) and Windham (1994), both of whom had found higher dropout rates among part-time students. Moore and Windham also found that younger students persist at higher rates than older students. Bonham and Luckie (1993) as well as Lewallen (1993) listed factors that were found to influence the decision to leave college before completing a program or degree (as cited in Brawer, 1996). The six reasons relayed by them were: working at a full-time job; carrying a grade point average that was “low”; being a member of a minority ethnic group excluding Asian American; family issues; financial issues; and being female.

O’Brien and Shedd (2001) noted a similar study conducted by the Institute for Higher Education Policy on college performance indicators (as cited in Brawer, 1996). This study concluded that there was a positive correlation between student success and those who participated in pre-college programs such as the Federal TRIO Programs and other institution-specific initiatives.

At the core of several studies on how to reduce the attrition rate of non-persisters in college lays great emphasis on retention strategies. Two approaches that seem to provide alternatives are orientation and mentoring programs. Offering orientation programs, the most widely used retention practice according to Coll and VonSeggern (1991), provides students with information fundamental to their academic socialization such as: descriptions of college program offerings; institutional expectation for students; career information exploring interests, values and abilities; encouragement to establish working relationships with faculty; information about services that help with adjustments to college; and financial aid information (as cited in Brawer, 1996).
In a 1995 study by Glass and Garrett of four community colleges located in North Carolina, it was found that participation in a student orientation program during a student’s first semester in college assisted in enhancing and maintaining student success regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, college major, scores on admission exam, or working a full or part-time job while in college (as cited in Brawer, 1996). Two years earlier an article by Nelson (1993) had stated that Florida’s Valencia Community College designed a long-term orientation class that targets student success (as cited in Brawer, 1996). This long-term orientation course assisted approximately 81% of its students to pass their first semester classes as compared to an approximate 56% success rate of students enrolled in other types of college preparatory courses and to an approximate 67% success rate of the remaining student body. At the completion of the fourth term of offering the orientation class, Nelson reported that 65% of the students who enrolled in the long-term orientation course were still in attendance at the college.

Another retention strategy commonly used by institutions nationwide is mentoring by peers and faculty. Santa Rita (1993) held that by making instructor-student interactions in the classroom more effective, the retention rate of students tends to increase. Clark, Davis, and Leeds (1995) wrote about Coffeyville Community College in Kansas, which also focused on instructor-student interactions. This program’s goal was to improve retention by enhancing its advising services. In 1993 the SELECT program boosted the retention of the students in the program to a 73% rate whereas students in the college orientation classes were retained at a 70%
rate, and students who were not participating in the orientation classes or the
SELECT program trailed at a retention rate of 42%.

An alternate effort to the orientation and faculty mentoring approaches discussed
above, peer-mentoring programs are considered highly effective in helping retain
students. Mueller’s (1993) article focused on the improvement of student success
rates. It discussed the ALANA (Asian, Latin, African, and Native American)
Program at Saint Clair County Community College. ALANA’s intent was to help
ethnic freshman students with academic support, identity issues, and social contacts
(as cited in Brawer, 1996).

In addition to single-focused initiatives such as mentoring and orientation
programs, other institutions preferred a multidimensional approach. Carrasquillo and
Fink (1994) wrote how Miramar College developed a retention program that had a
tutoring center available to students; however, Miramar prided itself on the fact that
all college employees work to retain students through interdepartmental efforts.
Grevatt (1992) relayed how Mohawk College in Ontario, Canada, found a significant
drop in attrition in six of its program areas; its model included the addition of
institutional research to the common mix of intervention strategies plus evaluation.

Price (1993) wrote that Allegheny Community College devised a number of
strategies to intervene and then retain its students. Some of those strategies were: an
orientation program for new freshmen; offices to work with female non-traditional
students; a seminar for freshmen to initiate interactions with faculty; a student work-
study program by which students could be employed on campus; and, finally, the
creation of a professional development program for faculty.
The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the United States Department of Education supported and produced a three-year national project of ten U.S. colleges and universities that enroll mostly Caucasian students and how these institutions have been able to increase the graduation rate of their minority students for a decade or longer. The recommendations of the study called for a comprehensive approach by institutions seriously wanting to rectify their failures regarding their graduation rates of minority students. It was strongly stated that an institution must implement all ten of the following recommendations in order to achieve success - to implement just one or two would be futile. The OERI’s recommendations (Richardson and de los Santos, 1988) were:

1. Announce your priorities – Colleges and universities that publicly announce their goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in degree attainment will make clear their firm commitment to educational opportunity.

2. Back your priorities – Spending an institution’s discretionary dollars to recruit, retain and graduate minority students will communicate seriousness.

3. Employ minority leaders – Employing minorities in senior leadership positions to send a clear message about the value of cultural diversity among professional staff.

4. Track your progress – Focused strategies to increase minority opportunity are most likely devised by institutions that collect detailed information on minority and non-minority undergraduate achievement patterns.

5. Emphasize quality – A quality education must include diversity, but not at the expense of rigor and excellence. Minority students need high-quality educations.
6. Reach out to community schools, agencies, and businesses? [sic] – A community wide effort can raise minority students’ aspirations and academic preparation. Elementary and high school students need role models, guidance to contact people on campus, and adequate financial aid information.

7. Bridge the educational gaps – Bridge programs include extended classes covering required material, tutoring, learning laboratories, collaborative study groups, and intrusive advising. They should be afforded to underprepared students – the most vulnerable to academic failure.

8. Reward good teaching and diversify your faculty – Rewards, tenure and promotions should be awarded for good teaching – characterized by caring, mentoring, sensitivity to cultural differences, and high expectations for all students.

9. Construct a nonthreatening social environment – Proportional representation is essential in helping minority groups retain their sense of cultural identity and avoid isolation. If needed, proportional representation should be supplemented by special programs, services, and facilities.

10. Provide comprehensive support services – Institutions committed to equality could provide integrated and comprehensive support services and will take a proactive role in providing financial aid.

St. John and Noell (1989) wrote, “All types of financial aid have been shown to have a positive influence on college enrollment, regardless of the student’s race or ethnicity” (as cited in Nora, 2001, ¶ 1). There are many types of federal and state
financial assistance providing grants and loans. Nora and Cabrera (1996) wrote that, however:

For minority students, whose financial aid does not meet college costs, the difference can be problematic. Having sufficient funds enhances college students’ academic performance, facilitates their social integration on campus, and increases their chances of persistence to graduate. (Nora, 2001, ¶ 1)

Studies on how students meet the cost of attending higher education point to merit scholarships and student loans as two commonly used sources for paying college expenses. In a study conducted by KRC Research (2003) approximately 66% of those surveyed indicated that they needed loans in order to cover the expenses of college. O’Brien and Shedd (2001) wrote that borrowing money for college was a common practice for students from low income families. Federal student loans accounted for approximately 73% of the borrowing whereas other sources provided loans for approximately 35% of the students (as cited in Brawer, 2002).

At the same time that institutions of higher education were devising and implementing various methods to increase student retention, several state governments had experimented with merit-based scholarships to raise access to post-secondary programs. Civil Rights Project Co-Director Gary Orfield (2002) had commented, “More than ever before, social and occupational mobility is related to higher education. Therefore, our goal must be to develop policies and programs that increase access to those students who have been overlooked in the past…” (Foreward section, ¶ 1). Indirectly and in principle, then, one of the main goals of
these merit scholarships is to promote enrollment into colleges by individuals of minority ethnicities.

State Funded Merit Scholarships

McPherson and Schapiro wrote, "In the late 1990s, institutions and state governments dramatically increased merit aid, a trend that has continued unabated" (as cited in Cornwell and Mustard, 2002, p. 59). More than a dozen states have established broad-based merit aid scholarships. In return for a respectable academic performance in high school, scholarship assistance is being awarded to hundreds of thousands of college-bound students. According to Dynarski's (2002) research, most merit programs require students to have a B average (3.0 GPA) or higher in order to qualify for assistance. Forty percent of the students who were high school seniors in 1999 held a minimum 3.0 GPA.

Georgia, New Mexico, and Nevada have similar scholarship programs available to their residents. All three states used comparable criteria to determine eligibility; the same criteria were also applied for award continuation after the first semester of enrollment.

Research on these elite forms of state-funded scholarships is barely yielding results, but available data seem to indicate that state merit assistance has greater impact on those students whose main decision is not whether to attend college but where to enroll for school (Marin, 2002; Dynarski, 2002). Consequently, this study will attempt to shed light on whether such an initiative, specifically the Nevada Millennium Program (MSP), has had the desired impact on the educational
attainment of those it intended to benefit the most under-represented and disadvantaged Nevadans – particularly Hispanic students. To establish guidelines for the purpose of evaluating the success of Nevada’s MSP, it is imperative to first examine Georgia’s and New Mexico’s merit programs.

The Georgia HOPE Scholarship

“The largest and most prominent merit-aid program in the nation was started in September 1993, when Georgia instituted a lottery-funded college scholarship for the purpose of ‘Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally’ (HOPE)” (Cornwell and Mustard, 2002, p. 59). Between the beginning of the HOPE Scholarship in 1993 and June of 2001, over 1.4 billion HOPE dollars were awarded to about 625,000 students. Cornwell and Mustard additionally wrote, “In size and scope, HOPE is now roughly twice as large as the Federal Pell Grant Program in Georgia” (p. 59). In the 1998-1999 academic year, over $189 million in HOPE funds were awarded to approximately 141,000 Georgia undergraduates; in comparison, approximately 62,000 students received Pell aid – totaling $113 million (Dynarski, 2002).

The HOPE Scholarship, which is merit-based, and the Hope Grant constitute the two types of scholarships available through the HOPE program. Currently, the scholarship award requires the Georgia graduate to complete high school with a “B” average in strictly academic courses identified as the “core curriculum.” Previous to the year 2000 the GPA requirement was defined in terms of college preparatory courses only (Cornwell and Mustard, 2002). In addition, the initial $66,000
household income cap was raised to $100,000 the following year and eliminated entirely thereafter (Heller, 2002; Dynarski, 2002).

For scholars in Georgia's degree-granting public post-secondary schools, the program pays all of a student's tuition and institutional mandatory fees as specified by HOPE guidelines. HOPE provides funding toward the cost of books also. At Georgia's public flagship institutions, the value of the award in 2001-2002 was $3500. At private degree-granting institutions the standard tuition award per academic year was $3000. In order to receive the HOPE Scholarship in the next academic year, college students must keep a "B" average with a minimum of credits as specified by HOPE guidelines.

The HOPE Grant, however, was considered an entitlement. A student's eligibility was not dependent on his/her GPA from high school. HOPE funds were to be used only in regard to programs that take two years or less to complete, such as a certificate program. Tuition and mandatory student fees, as specified by HOPE guidelines, were covered by the grant. HOPE grants were established to be used to fund all course work required for certificates or diplomas as set by the institution.

HOPE awards are evenly split between grants and scholarships; however, 80% of the scholarships awarded were given to students who eventually enrolled at 4-year institutions, both public and private. Eighty percent of HOPE scholars received 90% of the scholarships. A majority (95.4%) of the HOPE grant recipients attended technical schools. These technical students used 93% of all HOPE grant funds. In retrospect, very few Georgians who were grant recipients attended 4-year universities (Cornwell and Mustard, 2002).
The scholarship component of the HOPE Program showed an impressive amount of growth according to figures published for the years 1993-1999 by the Georgia Student Finance Commission (as cited in Cornwell and Mustard, 2002). The commission reported a rise of more than 50% during these years in regard to high school completers who met the HOPE merit requirements. Between 1993 and 1999 the number of HOPE-eligible high school graduates rose over 50% and the proportion of high school graduates satisfying the merit requirements. Over the same period of time, the number of HOPE-eligible graduates who attended Georgia's colleges and universities increased to 70% from 23%. A closer examination of these figures by the 2002 Civil Rights Project explained the rise by stating that the HOPE scholarship had been successful in having high school graduates remain in the state to attend college.

This incentive was greatest for the academically proficient who, with HOPE, faced in-state public or private college costs that were reduced relative to out-of-state counterparts. Clearly, the impact on college choice is greater at 4-year institutions since students who enrolled in 2-year institutions tended not to travel to another state to attend college. HOPE also served to reduce the cost relative to 2-year schools. As a result HOPE-eligible students who would have traditionally enrolled at a 2-year college were able to pursue a 4-year degree instead.

Cornwell, Mustard and Sridhar (2002) wrote that HOPE increased first-time college attendees in Georgia by 8%, relative to its neighboring states in the south (as cited in Cornwell and Mustard, 2002). The conclusion was that the Georgia HOPE Scholarship was more about a student's choice of college than it was about making
college accessible to more people. In other words, the Georgia HOPE Scholarship was created to make higher education affordable for those who would most likely not choose to attend college. In essence, the Georgia HOPE Scholarship mainly impacted which institution a student chose to attend.

Consequently, this 8% increase in Georgia’s college enrollment was felt mainly at the 4-year public and private schools. Enrollment rates in 2-year schools had not changed, and the HOPE Grant – not the Hope Scholarship – was more likely to fund new students in 2-year schools. Enrollment rates in non-degree programs at 2-year institutions would probably have dropped were it not for HOPE Grants.

On the surface the implication of having both (scholarship recipients attending 4-year institutions within state lines instead of out-of-state and increased numbers of students choosing 4-year over 2-year colleges) was that the overall growth in enrollment that occurred due to the HOPE Scholarships implies – at most – that college was becoming more accessible to more people. When figures on student enrollment rates by ethnicity were closely compared, it was found that the HOPE Scholarship program had a significantly larger influence on college choice than on college access when it came to African American students (Cornwell and Mustard, 2002).

HOPE Scholarships allowed for a 21% increase in college attendance by African American students at 4-year public institutions between 1993 and 1997; this exceeded the 5% increase of Caucasians in those same types of institutions (Cornwell and Mustard, 2002). One reason for this discrepancy was that African American students enrolled at a lower rate from the start; therefore, a relatively
minor increase in enrollment by African Americans produced a higher percentage of change. It is noteworthy that Georgia had a large number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), thus intensifying HOPE’s pressure on African American students to stay in Georgia in order to attend college.

According to Dynarski (2002) the increases that were seen in Georgia’s college enrollment by both Caucasians and African Americans alike were attributed to the HOPE Scholarship program. If the HOPE opportunities did not exist at that time, many of the students would have attended out-of-state colleges instead. The Civil Rights Project (2002) also revealed that a majority of the African American student enrollment growth occurred at the state’s less selective schools, Georgia’s HBCUs, with no comparable enrollment increase in Georgia’s more selective institutions.

For the most part, then, HOPE had a positive effect on the overall choice of a larger Georgian college or university. However, its impact had not been equally felt by all of the state’s high school graduates. Youths from higher income families fared better since they were more likely to advance in their schooling after the introduction of HOPE than students whose families were from lower income brackets. The Civil Rights Project reported that in comparison to other southern states, HOPE increased enrollment by 11.4% for students from families with incomes above $50,000 (Dynarski, 2002). Ironically, however, the program appeared to lack any tangible effect on enrollments for Georgia’s students who came from families whose incomes fell into the lower income designation. These results, therefore, should be interpreted with caution since family income was shown to be lower for only a select sub-sample of the data. It might be possible to conclude that Georgia’s HOPE had
widened the college attendance gap that already existed between the higher and the lower income families.

There were three apparent reasons for these college attendance gaps. First, initial application requirements for the HOPE Scholarship allowing for various income brackets could have played a role. During the first years of the HOPE Scholarship, Georgia high school graduates whose families each had an income of $50,000 or higher who additionally met HOPE’s specific high school GPA requirement qualified immediately for HOPE by completing a one-page application. Those students from even lower income families, on the other hand, had to file a complicated 4-page form and wait months to receive information on the amount of their grant awards. The amount of each student’s award was subtracted from his/her HOPE Scholarship award. This resulted in low income HOPE Scholarship recipients receiving smaller and more scholarships than those received by their more affluent peers.

Second, it seemed that the low income high school graduates who tended not to meet the GPA requirement for a HOPE award were the economically disadvantaged African American students. Additionally, it was deemed that these African American students were graduating from inadequately-funded schools that produced overall lower-achieving student bodies. A 1995 report of the National Center for Education Statistics contained other items of information regarding high school students that were valuable to this study. The report conveyed that of the high school seniors who enrolled into college in 1993, approximately 24.4% of them came from higher income families and possessed an academic standing of at least a 3.5 GPA.
while only 10% of those from families of lower income levels had GPAs that were equally as high (Dynarski, 2002).

HOPE’s academic eligibility requirements could actually have exacerbated the racial stratification of the universities and colleges within the state of Georgia by driving inequities in college access further into the system thus maintaining serious social and financial disparities among socio-economic groups. The advent of the HOPE spurned Georgia’s universities to increase their tuition costs and also raise the GPA qualification in order to be admitted as a student. By having greater bearing on students who are more likely to come from middle and upper-income households, HOPE may be hindering further progress in narrowing wage inequality among classes. O’Neil (1990) wrote that between the 1940s and 1970s, and Couch and Daly (2002) wrote that also in the 1990s, the racial differences in the level and quality of educational attainment may have resulted in the widening of wage gaps between African Americans and Caucasians (as cited in Cornwell and Mustard, 2002).

The third possible reason accounting for changes in college enrollment by income under HOPE could be linked to Georgia’s spending reduction on other need-based grants in the years following the scholarship launch. Such cutbacks have negatively affected low income students who critically relied on this type of assistance in order to afford a college education.

HOPE’s more substantial effect on Caucasian than on African American students was also evident in terms of enrollment growth rates by ethnicity. In Georgia from 1993 through 1997 college attendance among Caucasians rose at a 12.4% rate faster than in the rest of the southern U.S. Conversely, growth rates in
college attendance among Georgia’s African American students during the same period did not rise significantly in relation to other southeastern states. The implication is that HOPE had sharply increased the post-secondary education rate for Caucasians but was of inconsistent value when it came to the African Americans’ rate of going-to-college. Prior to HOPE, Georgia’s Caucasians were approximately 11% more likely to go to college than African Americans (Cornwell and Mustard, 2002).

All available evidence seemed to support HOPE’s role in altering college choice for Georgians, although HOPE did not necessarily assist in providing college access. Summary data presented by the Civil Rights Report (2002) suggested that HOPE accomplished primarily two things regarding choice than it did in changing the plans for high school graduates who were not planning on pursuing a college education. First, it pushed more students into 4-year colleges who normally would have attended 2-year schools; second, it convinced others who would have looked to out-of-state 4-year institutions to enroll into in-state institutions instead. As a result of both of these developments, the number of students from Georgia who attended 4-year schools located within the state of Georgia rose after HOPE was introduced (Dynarski, 2002).

In conclusion, the effect of Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship on college access is concentrated among Georgia’s Caucasian youth, who experienced a 12.4% rise in attendance when compared to Caucasians in neighboring states (Dynarski, 2002). African American student enrollment rates in Georgia did not even budge with the introduction of HOPE. In fact, the already large racial gap in regard to college
attendance in Georgia widened considerably after HOPE opportunities became available. As a merit program, HOPE had little positive impact on the schooling decisions of low income students in Georgia, many of whom were African Americans. If anything then, this merit program had served to contribute to the racial and income gaps in Georgia’s college attendance thus enabling more Georgians who were of ethnic minorities and/or low income households to attend college (Marin, 2002).

The New Mexico Lottery Success Scholarship

The New Mexico Lottery Tuition Fund, also known as the NM Success Scholarship, began in 1998. From Fall 1998 until Spring 2001 it disbursed 40.5 million dollars to 13,980 scholarship recipients who had chosen to attend one of the in-state colleges or universities (Binder, Ganderton, & Hutchens, 2002). Each year, revenue from the state lottery is transferred to the New Mexico State Treasurer’s Office and then allocated to the Lottery Success Scholarship Program where it is regulated by the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education.

It is different from the HOPE Scholarship of Georgia in that eligibility for the NM Success Program depends on the student’s GPA acquisition during the first semester in college and not on the student’s high school performance. Since students do not become eligible for the NM Success until their second semester in college, most New Mexican post-secondary schools offered a “bridge” scholarship that closely reflected the requirements of the NM Success. Between 1998 and 2000 the University of New Mexico’s freshman class had an overwhelmingly high number of
students who qualified for the Bridge for Success Scholarship. Eighty-three percent of beginning female freshmen and 86% of beginning male freshmen earned the awards in the first year of the program (Binder et al., 2002).

To automatically receive a full NM Success Scholarship to any New Mexico state-supported institution, a full-time college student must have had a minimum 2.5 GPA and be enrolled in a public 2-year or 4-year college the semester immediately after high school graduation. To maintain the NM Success Scholarship, a student had to be continuously enrolled full-time and had to exhibit a minimum GPA of 2.5. Participation in the NM Success program allowed students to qualify for as many as eight semesters of tuition assistance (Binder et al., 2002).

Interestingly, however, the second semester showed drastically different results. Fifty-one percent of male freshmen and 62% of second semester female freshmen students received the NM Success Scholarship. These statistics showed that bridge students either did not maintain GPAs of 2.5, or they did not maintain a continual enrollment. Minority men lost their scholarships at a higher rate than others. Forty-four percent of Hispanic men and nearly 66% of African American and Native American make students were ineligible after the second semester. After the initial two semesters of the NM Success program, there appeared to be a disproportionate over-representation of Caucasian students and students who were from more affluent families. The program, however, appeared to have increased the representation of female students, particularly in the Hispanic minority group.

Statistics showed that the NM Success Program disproportionately attracted students with lower academic credentials to New Mexico’s post-secondary
institutions as well as drew high-income students to the schools. Although students from all familial income levels increased their enrollments overall for most ethnic groups, those with family incomes of more than $40,000 had the largest enrollment responses with the exception of Native American students.

Fourteen percent of all new, freshmen students came from households with annual incomes of $20,000 or less, and 28% came from families with incomes of $40,000 or less. Those students who came from families with annual incomes over $40,000 had the largest enrollment rates.

The Civil Rights Project found an increase in enrollments from all family income levels. The NM Success Scholarship Program had a higher participation by students from higher income families. Additionally, the Civil Rights Project report indicated that a majority of recipients were Caucasian students from higher income families (Binder et al., 2002).

Comparisons of pre-program and post-program enrollment provided by the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDs) for identifying high school graduate enrollment rates at 2-year and 4-year schools according to state residency also indicated that the NM Success Program did not significantly change “going-to-college” rates for New Mexican students (Binder et al., 2002). The increase in higher education enrollments among New Mexico students since the inception of the NM Success Program in 1998 merely reflected the upward enrollment trends that were projected prior to the introduction of the lottery-based scholarship initiative.
When a comparison of New Mexico students with students in the neighboring states of Arizona and Colorado was made, no significant difference were found between overall college enrollment trends among the three groups. Arizona and Colorado were similar to New Mexico in regard to relatively small populations in respect to acreage and in respect to depending on economies which hinged on the production of natural resources. Enrollment rates at in-state colleges and universities seemed to be what the NM Success Program had impacted to a greater extent.

According to the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education, New Mexico experienced an increase of seven percentage points in enrollment rates for in-state schools in 1998. This represented a 16% increase from the pre-program average. Closer analysis, however, revealed that the NM Success Program produced a significant diversion of students away from out-of-state institutions and into in-state colleges and universities but not necessarily an increase in “going-to-college” rates (Binder et al., 2002). The NM Success Scholarship, it seems, did not necessarily create more access to college for New Mexico high school completers. Just as the HOPE Scholarship Program of Georgia, the NM Success Scholarship had greater bearing on college choice than it did on giving more people access to higher education.

The NM Success Program also appeared to have prompted a shift from 2-year colleges to 4-year schools in New Mexico. In comparisons with Arizona and Colorado, New Mexico reported a sharp decrease in 2-year schools’ enrollments between 1996 and 1998 as well as a sharp rise in the enrollments at 4-year schools.
during this same timeframe. This trend mirrored the results that the state of Georgia experienced after the HOPE Scholarship was initiated (Binder et al., 2002).

In conclusion, the NM Success Program was promoted as a way by which individuals could access a post-secondary education, especially for student groups that did not usually consider college as a viable option. The Civil Rights Project also found little evidence of the program having such an effect. As with Georgia's HOPE Scholarship, the NM Success Program appeared to recall students who had left New Mexico to attend out-of-state schools to resume their educations in New Mexico or to assist more students to enroll into 4-year institutions instead of 2-year colleges within the state's boundaries (Binder et al., 2002).

The Nevada Millennium Scholarship

Nevada is ranked thirty-ninth in the nation in regard to high school graduation rate and in last position when it came to high school graduates moving immediately on to college (Powers 2004). This information motivated Governor Kenny Guinn and the Nevada State Legislature to create the Millennium Scholarship Program (MSP) in 1988; it was funded from 40% of Nevada's settlement from the national lawsuit against the manufacturers of tobacco products through the enactment of Senate Bill No. 496 (1999). This merit-based initiative was conceived to help reverse educational under-performance by state residents. Representatives from the State Treasurer's Office, the Office of the Chancellor, the Governor's Office, the Nevada Department of Education, and from each of the institutions within the University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN) formed the steering committee
charged with setting the award criteria and formulating policy to administer the scholarship program. The final report presented by the Chancellor to the Board of Regents was forwarded to Governor Guinn and voted into law by the Nevada State Legislature in 1999 to create the Millennium Scholarship Trust Fund so that scholarships under the Millennium Program could be awarded for the fall semester of 2000. Immediately thereafter, the Board of Regents for the UCCSN adopted the guidelines by which the scholarship monies would be administered (Office of the State Treasurer, 2002).

For a Nevada high school graduate to be eligible to participate in the MSP, the following criteria had to be met: earn a graduation diploma from a Nevada public or private high school in the year 2000 or thereafter; complete high school with at least a 3.0 GPA calculated by using all high school credit granting courses (the final GPA may be weighted or unweighted); pass all areas of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination; and be a resident of Nevada for at least two of the four years spent in a Nevada high school, as defined by the Board of Regents policy, which is stated in Senate Bill 496, Section 7 (1999).

The State Treasurer's Millennium Scholarship Office reviewed eligibility questions and handled exceptions on diplomas from non-Nevada public or private high schools. The MSP qualification process consisted of: a student’s name and identification number being submitted by one of Nevada’s public school districts to the State Treasurer’s Office (no application form needed to be completed); the Treasurer’s Millennium Office sent a notification packet to each student who is being awarded; the awarded student must enroll in an eligible institution of higher
learning in Nevada; the awarded student must enroll in a minimum of six credit
hours each semester at a community college or enroll in twelve credits at a 4-year
UCCSN school; the awarded student must enroll in a program of study that leads
“...toward a recognized associate degree, baccalaureate degree, or pre-baccalaureate
certificate” (Office of the State Treasurer 2002, Maintaining Eligibility section, ¶1).

To maintain eligibility after the initial semester in the MSP, a student must have
made and maintained satisfactory academic progress (a minimum GPA of 2.0) in
his/her declared program of study. Additionally, the student must have completed a
minimum of 6 credits at a Nevada community college or 12 credits at one of
Nevada’s universities or 4-year colleges (Office of the State Treasurer, 2002).

To regain eligibility once it was lost, a student had to enroll into a UCCSN
school without the use of the MSP, earn a GPA of 2.0 or higher for that probationary
semester, and then complete the minimum number of credit hours according to the
type of institution being attended.

In terms of the scholarship value, the MSP scholar was permitted to receive
assistance for up to eight academic years following the student’s graduation from
high school, not exceeding $10,000 for all undergraduate studies. Award
disbursement each semester is based upon a per-credit cost. For the 2002-2003
academic year, a qualifying UCCSN community college student was awarded $40
per credit hour for lower division courses and $60 per credit hour for upper division
courses (though Nevada community colleges do not offer upper division courses).
During that same year, MSP scholars at the state’s only 4-year college were awarded
$60 per credit hour while scholars who attended either of Nevada’s two universities received $80 per credit hour (Office of the State Treasurer, 2002).

In comparison to Georgia’s and New Mexico’s merit programs where there were 34 and 28 post-secondary public institutions respectively, Nevada is small with only six institutions in existence at the time that this study began.

In the Fall 2000 semester, which was the first year of the MSP, 7306 high school completers were eligible to receive the scholarship. Only 5708 of these, however, accepted the award by submitting an acknowledgment form to the Office of the Treasurer. This figure indicated a 78.13% MSP participation rate for the year 2000 (J. Bearce, personal communication, April 4, 2001).

In the Fall 2001 semester, 7856 Nevada high school graduates qualified to receive the MSP, but only 5835 of them completed the required paperwork and submitted it to the Office of the State Treasurer. During the second year of the MSP’s existence in Nevada, 74.27% of the eligible graduates submitted the proper paperwork; this percentage was a 4% decrease from those who were eligible. Nevada high school graduates in 2001 outnumbered those from the year 2000 by 550. However, the number of MSP students who participated increased by only 127 (J. Bearce, personal communication, April 4, 2001).

Performance Results and Research Questions

Angelo Ancheta, in his role as Director of Legal and Policy Advocacy Programs for the Civil Rights Project, stated:
We have to be especially watchful because merit scholarship programs carry potential risks to equal opportunity for racial and ethnic minority students. The use of criteria such as standardized test scores and grades to determine “merit” has adverse effects on low-income and minority students. (“Merit Scholarships,” 2002, ¶ 5)

The Civil Rights Project of 2002 reported that the increasing number of merit scholarships that were being given to college students was being given to those students who traditionally would have attended college anyway; these “traditional” students included Caucasians and those from higher and middle income brackets. Furthermore, the material garnered for the project’s report showed that merit scholarships do not provide enough dollars to the most financially needy students (“Merit Scholarships,” 2002, ¶ 6).

Patricia Marin (2002), Research Associate at the Civil Rights Project, summed up the general findings of this researcher when she wrote:

Merit aid programs are very popular because rewarding students for their academic work seems to be the right thing to do. While on the surface these programs seem reasonable, in reality they are not only ignoring existing needs but are actually exacerbating problems, such as the racial stratification of institutions, that we already witness in higher education. Of course, the effects on education are just the beginning of a larger chain reaction. Post education, these programs may lead to larger wage and income gaps along racial lines, increasing the disparities already observed in our society. The potential long term effects are enormous. (p. 113)
There is very little research available to assist in predicting what the final outcomes of state-based merit scholarships will be on traditionally disadvantaged and under-represented student groups. Suggestions from the Civil Rights Project (2002) deserve consideration, especially as Nevada continues to battle reserve shortfalls and looming tax increases. The following are implications derived from available preliminary studies.

First, the term *merit* must be redefined. The new definition should ensure that the selection of all scholarship recipients are not determined by a single identifier such as standardized test scores. Such measurements often restrict the participation by already under-represented ethnic groups. Efforts should be made to standardize the criteria to allow equal opportunity to receive a merit scholarship regardless of geographic advantages due to economics. Second, merit scholarships should target students from families with incomes that fall below an established cap similar to other financial aid programs. Finally, merit scholarship recipients should also be allowed to receive need-based financial assistance and not be forced to choose between one or the other (“Merit Scholarships,” 2002).

**Summary**

Hispanic is the fastest growing minority ethnic group in the United States today, and it is projected to be the largest minority cluster by the mid-21st century. Since so many Hispanics are between the ages of five and eighteen, it has been estimated that over 25% of the U.S. population in 2030 will be Hispanic. The Hispanic sub-groups
that are comprised of the largest numbers of people are the Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican.

In the Hispanic culture, it is commonly a priority to put the survival of one’s family first. Due to this practice, many young Hispanics join the workforce after high school graduation as opposed to enrolling into college full-time. Some of the barriers and hindrances to college that they, in general, must contend with include limited proficiency in English, familial poverty level, and previous public school education that was received in lower quality schools.

Several studies that focused on the improvement of Hispanic student persistence and academic success in college have repeatedly found specific services and activities to aid in this goal. Pre-college programs, orientation programs, orientation courses, faculty and peer mentors, tutoring, and other intervention and retention strategies were found to contribute to positive outcomes.

Many states have instituted merit-based scholarships to help make post-secondary education more accessible to more individuals by rewarding designated high school performance with tuition assistance for college. The Georgia HOPE Scholarship and the New Mexico Lottery Success Scholarship are just two such programs. The HOPE and NM Success Programs were studied because of the similarities between them and the Nevada Millennium Scholarship Program.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigated student success of Hispanic Millennium Scholars enrolled at a comprehensive community college compared with student success of non-Hispanic Millennium Scholars and with non-Millennium Scholars. The study was conducted at CCSN, a three-campus, comprehensive, 2-year community college that supports the needs of the citizens of Southern Nevada. Students who attend CCSN are provided educational and support services by which their needs in the areas of general education, transfer preparation, vocational education, basic skills development, adult education, and community service can be met.

CCSN was selected for this study because CCSN served the largest number of Millennium Scholars – both Hispanic and non-Hispanic - at a Nevada community college. It offers the widest variety of programs which can be classified as either academic, transfer, or vocational. There has been no study of the relative success of Hispanic Millennium Scholars when compared with other community college students in Nevada. A review of the literature pertinent to Millennium scholarships suggested that most programs had several goals.

These goals included but were not limited to: improving success; improving access for minority students; improving/expanding choices of colleges; increasing
the "go-to-college" rate for high school graduates, particularly in regard to minority students; and reducing student migration to out-of-state institutions.

Research Questions

The Nevada MSP was heralded to Nevada high school students and their parents previous to its actual implementation. Press releases, newscasts on radio and television, interviews of politicians and public school district administrators, and public service announcements provided general information to the entire state of Nevada.

In Las Vegas, though, CCSN was taking an active leadership role in MSP outreach activities and efforts. CCSN's Recruitment Office worked diligently to inform parents and to work with the public high schools in Southern Nevada to provide as smooth a path as possible for qualifying high school graduates to enroll at CCSN as MSP scholars. Once these students were enrolled and participating in courses, they were encouraged to utilize the academic support services that were set in place specifically for them as well as the services that were available to any CCSN student.

Therefore, one might expect that after two years of marketing, promotion, and both financial and academic assistance to CCSN students who qualified for the MSP, the MSP would have had a positive effect on the "go-to-college" rate as well as the academic success of the Hispanics in the program. This study is a conscious effort to determine if the MSP had been successful in attracting and retaining Hispanic students at CCSN.
The questions of this research study were designed to evaluate the impact of the overall MSP on the MSP students who were Hispanic. The five questions for which the researcher wanted to obtain answers were:

1. How does year-to-year persistence of full-time MSP Hispanics compare with non-Hispanics during the first year of each cohort?

2. How does course taking differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics?

3. How does course work performance (GPA) differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics?

4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the first and last semester GPAs of MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics in the study?

5. Is there a statistically significant difference in persistence in regard to:
   a.) MSP Hispanic males and females compared to non-MSP Hispanic students regardless of gender; b.) MSP Hispanic males to non-MSP Hispanic males;
   c.) MSP Hispanic females to non-MSP Hispanic females?

This study investigated the success of Hispanic Millennium Scholars as compared to the overall success of other Millennium Scholars and non-Millennium Scholars at a comprehensive community college. The primary objective of the analysis was to determine the success of Hispanic Millennium Scholars compared with other community college students and to assess the impact of the MSP on enrollment at CCSN.

Additionally, the impact of the MSP on higher education enrollments in Nevada was examined. Indicators of student success, including GPA and retention, were
examined for Hispanic and non-Hispanic MSP students, Hispanic and non-Hispanic regularly enrolled students, and Hispanic and non-Hispanic regularly enrolled first-time, first-term students. CCSN student records were examined from Fall 2000 to Spring 2003.

Design of the Study

The researcher conducted background research to review similar programs nationwide. He then focused on the merit programs in both Georgia and New Mexico. The Georgia program is the most notable of all state merit scholarship programs, and the New Mexico program had a very large number of Hispanic participants. The researcher conducted this study of the merit program in Nevada since minimal data existed statewide. He chose CCSN as the focus of this study because he had access to data on merit students through his administrative capacity at the college. Data regarding the research were collected from the State of Nevada Chancellor’s Office, State of Nevada Treasurer’s Office, CCSN’s Office of the Millennium Program, CCSN’s Admissions & Records Office, and CCSN’s Institutional Research Office.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were 556 Hispanic students who were enrolled with full-time student status (12 or more credit hours each semester) at CCSN between the academic years of 2000 and 2003. The subjects were divided into two cohorts. Cohort A was comprised of 275 Hispanic students of which 86 were MSP
participants and 189 were non-MSP students; all of these students began classes in
the fall of 2000. Cohort B consisted of 281 Hispanic studen
the MSP and 178 were not in the MSP; all of the Cohort B students began classes in
the fall of 2001.

Collection of Data

The researcher initially began with statistical information from the UCCSN
Chancellor’s Office. Data such as statewide enrollments by college or university,
FTE (full-time equivalent), and ethnicity were reviewed.

The MSP is under the State Department of the Treasurer’s Office, and the office
provided data on the inception of the MSP and data on the number of high school
graduates eligible by county or district as well as the number of MSP students who
used the scholarship from the Fall 2000 semester and subsequent semesters.
Information regarding persistence was also collected from the MSP Office in May
2003, the State Treasurer’s Office. Additionally, the Millennium Scholarship Office
released its initial study of the MSP which the researcher reviewed and utilized for
this study.

The Admissions & Records Office and the Office of Institutional Research at
CCSN provided student data for the information sought for this study. This
information came from the Student Information System managed by Admissions &
Records. Statistics that were provided by the Office of Institutional Research came
from the same CCSN student database.
Federal requirements on enrollments nationwide were reviewed and used in this study. In particular, the Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System's (IPEDS) data on high school graduates for Nevada who enrolled at a college or university between the years of 1998 – 2001.

Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed using cross tabulations to examine the relativity among variables such as MSP Hispanic and non-MSP Hispanic students enrolled at CCSN full-time between the periods of Fall 2000 and Spring 2003. Different variables included studying the enrollment trends into academic or vocational course, GPAs, persistence, and their relative performance to other ethnic groups at CCSN. Chi-square tests were used to further explain the significance of those relationships. Relationships at a .05 level of probability were seen as significant.

Significance of the Study

The MSP began statewide in the fall of 2000 and completed its pilot year in May of 2001 at the close of the spring semester. The MSP is modeled after similar efforts in other states such as New Mexico and Georgia. As of the fall of 2002, seventeen states had some type of merit scholarship program for their high school graduates. The state of Nevada has heralded the MSP as a major step in increasing its low “go-to-college” rate, which was the lowest in the country as this study commenced.

Millions of dollars had been provided for this program, and each college or university in Nevada participated vigorously. The influx of Millennium Scholarships
to each school was critical to the school’s FTE and headcount—not to mention state bragging rights. Thousands of Millennium Scholarship students were monitored by a MSP Office housed with the State Treasurer’s Office. Each campus of each institution had a person or office designated to assist MSP students and to ensure compliance with state requirements for the program.

At the start of this study, the population of Nevada was approximately 20% Hispanic. Clark County, in which CCSN is located, had nearly a 25% Hispanic population. It is very apparent, therefore, that the question of how Hispanics were performing in the MSP was extremely vital. At a time when Hispanics were the fastest growing population in the U.S., one needed to ask what was being done to assure that Hispanics were also advancing their educations.

In Clark County, where Hispanics had the largest dropout rate in the state, the county needed to take action to improve the retention rate of Hispanic post-secondary students. The MSP was a good place to look. One could surmise that Hispanics in the MSP would fare better than Hispanics who were not in the MSP due to the considerable efforts by each CCSN campus to assist them, but was this assumption true?

This study looked at the success rate of Hispanics in the MSP as well as those outside of the MSP. It only looked at full-time students who had graduated the same year as the MSP cohort. For comparison purposes it looked at other ethnic groups particularly African Americans, Asians, and Caucasians. The study focused on MSP students and non-MSP students at CCSN. The results of the research study were
valuable in promoting the future success of the Hispanic students. The researcher had chosen to look only at CCSN for this study.

Limitations of the Study

This study was restricted to the MSP at CCSN. A further restriction was to include only full-time students both in and out of the MSP during the two years of this study. There were three assumptions regarding the MSP scholars. First, it was assumed that all MSP students were successful high school graduates with GPAs of at least 3.0. Second, it assumed that the MSP students had completed all of their high school graduation requirements, which included passing the High School Proficiency Exam. Third, it was assumed that all MSP students were self motivators and had come from families that strongly supported education.

Summary

The study investigated the success of Hispanic Millennium Scholars as compared to the success of other Millennium Scholars and non-Millennium Scholars at a comprehensive community college. The primary objectives of the analysis were: to determine the success of Hispanic Millennium Scholars when compared with other CCSN students; and to assess the impact of the MSP on enrollment at CCSN. For the purposes of the study, the indicators of student success included GPA and retention. These indicators were examined in regard to: Hispanic and non-Hispanic MSP students in general; Hispanic and non-Hispanic students who were regularly
enrolled, first-time, first-term students. The study examined the academic records of CCSN students as it explored answers to the research questions.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The researcher was concerned as to the impact the State of Nevada’s merit program was having on Hispanic students at CCSN. The MSP was new to the state as of the Fall 2002 semester, but specific data were not available from the State Treasurer’s Office by which the success – or lack of success – of MSP Hispanic students could be determined. This study intended to assess the impact of the MSP on Hispanic students at CCSN.

The research questions that guided this exploratory study were:

1. How does year-to-year persistence of full time MSP Hispanics compare with non-MSP Hispanics during the first year of each cohort?

2. How does course work taking differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics?

3. How does course work performance (GPA) differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics?

4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the first and last semester grade point averages of MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics in the study?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference in persistence in regards to: a) MSP Hispanic males and females compared to non-MSP Hispanic students regardless of gender; b) MSP Hispanic males to non-MSP Hispanic males; c) MSP Hispanic females to non-MSP Hispanic females?

The research questions were addressed by reviewing statistical information provided by the State Treasurer's Office and the Millennium Program Office, the Civil Rights Reports on merit programs, and federal reports as well as UCCSN data and student data from CCSN's Admissions & Records and Institutional Research Offices. These data provided specific information on Hispanic students; progress in the MSP between the years 2000-2003.

Cross tabulations of descriptive data were used to examine the relativity among variables. In order to determine which relationship among the data from the study were significant, chi-square testing to ascertain if the differences that were found among groups were statistically larger than what would be expected to be found (Blalock, 1972). The relationships that were found to be significant at the .05 level were given further consideration (Bordens and Abbott, 1996).

Research Question 1

The first research question was: How does year to year persistence of full-time MSP Hispanics compare with full-time non-MSP Hispanics? For the purpose of this study, year to year persistence was defined as Hispanic MSP students having and maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or better each semester within the academic year and maintaining a continual enrollment.
The Fall 2000 semester was the first semester that the Nevada MSP was in operation. During that semester there were 275 full-time Hispanic students enrolled at CCSN; this group was referred to as Cohort A (See Table 1). Of these 275 Hispanic students 31% (86) were students in the MSP. Approximately 68% (189) of Cohort A students were enrolled full-time at CCSN and were not part of the MSP. Approximately 35% of the persisting Hispanic students in Cohort A were part of the MSP and the remaining 65% of the Hispanic persisters were non-MSP students from the Fall 2000 through the Spring 2001 semester. These last two figures indicate that 60% (166) of Hispanic students overall from Cohort A had persisted in their studies at CCSN according to this study’s definition of persistence.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persistence – Fall 2000 to Fall 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-MSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Additionally, Table 1 shows that approximately 38% (109) of the 275 full-time Hispanic students in Cohort A did not persist from fall 2000 to Fall 2001. Of this number, 24% (27) were Hispanic MSP students and 75% (82) were Hispanic non-MSP students.

The Fall 2001 semester was the first semester of the second year that the Nevada MSP was in operation. During that semester there were 281 full-time Hispanic students enrolled at CCSN; this group was referred to as Cohort B (See Table 2). Of the 281 Hispanic students 36% (102) were students in the MSP. Approximately 64% (179) of Cohort B students were enrolled full-time at CCSN and were not part of the MSP. Forty-three percent (72) of the Hispanic MSP students in Cohort B as well as 57% (95) of the Hispanic non-MSP students persisted from Fall 2001 to the Fall 2002 semester.

Table 2

Persistence – Fall 2001 to Fall 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic Students</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Non-Persistent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M  F  Total</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSP</td>
<td>22 50 72</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-MSP</td>
<td>48 47 95</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70 97 167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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These last two figures indicated that 46% (129) of Hispanic students overall from Cohort B had persisted in their studies at CCSN according to this study's definition of persistence.

Additionally, Table 2 shows that approximately 41% (114) of the 281 full-time Hispanic students in Cohort B did not persist from Fall 2001 to Fall 2002. Of this number, 26% (30) were Hispanic MSP students and 74% (84) were Hispanic non-MSP students.

Cohort A and Cohort B had a similar number of students, 275 and 281 respectively. Semester to semester persistence between Cohort A and Cohort B during the first year of each cohort showed that Cohort A had 189 of its students persist, and Cohort B had 179 of its 281 Hispanic students persist. A comparison of percentages shows that 35% of the Cohort A Hispanic MSP students persisted, but 43% of the Hispanic MSP students in Cohort B persisted. Also, 64% of the Hispanic non-MSP students in Cohort A persisted whereas only 57% of the Hispanic non-MSP students in Cohort B persisted to the next academic year.

In Cohort A, Hispanic students who were not part of the MSP from Fall 2000 to Fall 2001 did not persist at as high a rate as Hispanic students who were in the MSP during this same time frame. Hispanic non-MSP students' persistence rate was only 57% whereas the Hispanic MSP students persisted at 69% (See Table 3).

The data that were obtained for this study included figures for CCSN students of other ethnicities. When Hispanic MSP students were compared with MSP students of other ethnicities, the Hispanic students had the highest rate of persisters (approximately 7.3% of African American MSP students and 8.5% of MSP Asian
students persisted to Fall 2001), but about 15% of Hispanic students did so (See Table 4). When a comparison of non-MSP students was made, it was found that slightly more than 11% of African American students and approximately 19% of Asian students persisted. The Hispanic non-MSP students fall between these two groups at approximately an 18% persistence rate.

Table 3

Overall Hispanic Persisters, Cohort A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Number of</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Peristers</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSP</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-MSP</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>166</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohort B students fared similarly to those in Cohort A. During the period from Fall 2001 to Fall 2002 only 53% (95) of the Hispanic non-MSP students persisted as opposed to a 71% (72) persistence rate for Hispanic students who were MSP scholars (See Table 5).

The persistence rate of all Hispanic students from Fall 2001 to Fall 2002 was compared with the data available on students of other ethnicities who were enrolled.
at CCSN during that same time. Approximately 6.6% of African American MSP students and 10.6% Asian MSP students persisted; these percentages were lower than the 18.2% persistence rate of Hispanic MSP students (See Table 6).

Table 4

Persistence – Fall 2000 to Fall 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAU</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>586</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that the non-MSP students of Cohort B mirrored those of Cohort A. The non-MSP African American students again had the lowest persistence rate at 8.3%, the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Number of Persisters</th>
<th>% Persistence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSP</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-MSP</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hispanic non-MSP students were the middle figure at just over 13%, and the Asian non-MSP student group was the one with the highest rate of persisters at 20.7%.

As written earlier, more Hispanic female students enrolled into CCSN courses than Hispanic males. A chi-square analysis was calculated among male and female students who were in the MSP from Fall 2001 to Fall 2002 by using information from Table 2. The result ($x^2 = 1.09, \text{df}, p > .05$) was found to not be significant in regard to gender. When an analysis was performed on the persistence rates of Hispanic MSP students in relationship to the persistence rate of Caucasian MSP students, the result ($x^2 = 0.533, \text{df}, p > .05$) indicated that there was no statistical significance. When an analysis of persistence was performed between Hispanic MSP students and MSP students of other minority ethnicities, there was no significant difference found in persistence rates ($x^2 = 0.769, \text{df}, p > .05$).
Table 6

Persistence – Fall 2001 to Fall 2002

Persistence – All Ethnicities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Millennium</th>
<th>Non-Millennium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAU</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine if the general appeal of the MSP might have had an impact on Hispanic enrollment at CCSN, the researcher looked at previous academic years. Tables 7 and 8 show incremental increases in minority enrollment in Fall 1998 to Fall 1999 across all ethnic categories (J. Bearce, personal communication, April 4, 2001). The ratio of Hispanic females to males, however, was noted as the exception. In both Fall 1998 and Fall 1999, the ratio of females to males in the breakdown of Hispanic enrollments was almost equal with slightly more males being enrolled in
Fall 1998. It is interesting that by Fall 2000, though, the female Hispanic students exceeded the male Hispanic enrollment by 14%. Therefore, this figure may suggest that the MSP both encouraged and enabled qualifying Hispanic female high school graduates to enroll at CCSN.

Research Question 2

The second research question was: How does course taking differ between MSP Hispanic and non-MSP Hispanics? For the purpose of this study, course taking was defined as whether the students enrolled in occupational (vocational) courses or non-occupational (academic) courses, or a combination of both during their first semester as a cohort participant.

Courses were determined to be either occupational/vocational or academic according to the definitions given here. An occupational/vocational course was defined as a course that prepares students to enter the workforce with a Certificate or Associate of Applied Science Degree. An academic course, conversely, was defined as a non-occupational, academic course which can be used for an Associate of Arts Degree or for transfer to a university.

Cohort A consisted of 275 full-time Hispanic students with 31% (86) of those students participating in the MSP (See Table 9). Sixty-eight percent (189) of Cohort A students were not participants in the MSP.

Data were collected regarding the courses selected by each full-time Hispanic student in the MSP. Thirty-four percent (29) of those students chose courses that were all categorized as non-occupational (See Table 9). Two percent (2) of the
### Table 7

**Fall 1998**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>182/53.68</td>
<td>157/46.31</td>
<td>13.73</td>
<td>339/1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS (+HP)</td>
<td>1330/54.35</td>
<td>1117/45.64</td>
<td>16.01</td>
<td>2447/9.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>1652/59.04</td>
<td>1146/40.95</td>
<td>30.62</td>
<td>2798/10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>2093/49.83</td>
<td>2107/50.16</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>4200/15.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WH</td>
<td>9210/53.17</td>
<td>8110/46.82</td>
<td>11.94</td>
<td>17320/63.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14467/53.37</td>
<td>12637/46.62</td>
<td>12.64</td>
<td>27104/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8

**Fall 1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>193/52.44</td>
<td>175/47.55</td>
<td>9.32</td>
<td>368/1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS (+HP)</td>
<td>1596/55.62</td>
<td>1273/44.37</td>
<td>20.23</td>
<td>2869/9.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>2274/60.86</td>
<td>1462/39.13</td>
<td>35.70</td>
<td>3736/11.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>2564/50.20</td>
<td>2543/49.79</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>3107/16.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WH</td>
<td>10357/53.10</td>
<td>9145/46.89</td>
<td>11.70</td>
<td>19502/61.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16984/53.77</td>
<td>13598/46.22</td>
<td>14.04</td>
<td>31582/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students were enrolled in occupational courses only. Seven percent (6) of the students were enrolled in courses that were evenly distributed between non-occupational and occupational courses.

Students who carried a course load consisting of more than 50% non-occupational courses totaled 55% (47). This figure far outweighed the 2% (2) students who carried a course load consisting of 50% or more occupational courses.

Cohort A consisted of 275 students with 68% (189) of those students not participating in the MSP. Data were collected regarding the courses selected by each of these students. Thirty-one percent (59) of these students chose courses that were all categorized as non-occupational (See Table 9). Thirty-four percent (45) of the students were enrolled in occupational courses only. Seven percent (13) of the students were enrolled in courses that were evenly distributed between non-occupational and occupational courses. Students enrolled in mostly non-occupational courses totaled 35% (66) and 3% (6) enrolled mostly in occupational courses.

Cohort B consisted of 281 full-time Hispanic students with 36% (102) of them participating in MSP (See Table 10). Data were collected regarding courses selected by each full-time Hispanic student in the MSP. Thirty-two percent (33) of those students chose courses that were all categorized as non-occupational. Three percent (3) of the students were enrolled in occupational courses only. Fifteen percent (15) of the students were enrolled in courses that were evenly distributed between non-occupational and occupational courses. Students who were enrolled in mostly non-occupational courses totaled approximately 42% (42), and 9% (9) enrolled in occupational courses.
Table 9

Students Taking Occupational Classes – Fall 2000

Hispanic Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occ Class Load</th>
<th>Millennium Students</th>
<th>Non-Millennium Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Non-Occ</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Occ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Non Occ</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Occ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohort B consisted of 281 full-time Hispanic students with 64% (179) of those students not participating in the MSP (See Table 10). Data were collected regarding the courses selected by each of these students. Twenty-eight percent (50) of these students chose courses that were all categorized as non-occupational. Eighteen percent (33) of the students were enrolled in occupational courses only. Fourteen percent (25) of the students were enrolled in courses that were evenly distributed between non-occupational and occupational courses. Students enrolled in mostly
Table 10

Students Taking Occupational Classes – Fall 2001

Hispanic Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occ Class Load</th>
<th>Millennium</th>
<th>Non-Millennium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Non-Occ</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Occ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Non Occ</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Occ</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

non-occupational courses totaled approximately 33% (59) and 7% (12) enrolled in mostly occupational courses.

After a review of the data on course taking patterns, the researcher found some noticeable difference in Cohort A and Cohort B between the full-time MSP Hispanic and the non-MSP Hispanics in regard to the course taking habits by gender.

Table 3 showed that Cohort A’s MSP students had 34% of the students taking all non-occupational courses. In this group of students who were carrying a course load that consisted of only non-occupational courses, the number of female students was approximately twice the number of male students, the MSP students who were
female numbered nineteen while the male students numbered at ten (See Table 9). The data additionally indicated that no females enrolled in all occupational courses or were carrying a course load of 50% or more occupational courses. Almost twice as many females (30) as males (17) were enrolled in similar semester schedules, which consisted of mostly non-occupational courses.

In contrast, the non-MSP students of Cohort A were enrolled almost evenly by gender in all non-occupational courses, with the male (30) slightly higher than the female (29) (See Table 9). Surprisingly, eight times as many males (40) as females (5) carried course loads that consisted of all occupational courses.

In Cohort B, the MSP students who were female (24) were more likely to enroll in all non-occupational courses than males (9) (See Table 10). However, only one female MSP enrolled in all occupational courses compared to two males. Twice as many females (6) as males (3) enrolled in mostly occupational courses.

In contrast, the non-MSP female students of Cohort B enrolled in all non-occupational courses at almost twice the number of males, 34 and 16 respectively (See Table 10). A noteworthy item in the data was in the area of all occupational course taking. Thirty-two males were enrolled in all occupational courses as compared to only 1 female. It was both interesting and surprising that three times as many males (9) enrolled in mostly occupational courses as females (3). The overall data on both cohorts suggested that MSP Hispanic male students were being advised or guided toward non-occupational courses when compared to non-MSP Hispanic male students.
In review of the occupational and non-occupational courses during the Fall 2000, nineteen of the total number Hispanic MSP students and Hispanic non-MSP students (6 and 13 respectively) scheduled themselves for an even course load (same number in occupational courses as in non-occupational courses). These 19 students were not included in the analysis (See Table 9). Approximately 95% (76) of the remaining Hispanic MSP students and 71% (125) of the remaining Hispanic non-MSP students were enrolled primarily in non-occupational courses. Chi-square tests indicated that it was extremely statistically significant that so many more Hispanic MSP students enrolled in non-occupational courses than Hispanic non-MSP students ($x^2 = 17.35$, df, $p = <0.0001$).

The researcher compared the course taking between Hispanic MSP females and Hispanic MSP males for the Fall 2000 semester (See Table 9). It was found that 100% (49) of the Hispanic MSP females compared with 87% (27) of the Hispanic MSP males were enrolled in non-occupational classes. Chi-square testing indicated that this difference was statistically significant ($x^2 = 4.216$, df, $p = < .05$). When compared with the other minority MSP students, it was found that there was no significant difference in the selection of courses.

Overall, the MSP students overwhelmingly chose to enroll in non-occupational courses ($x^2 = 0.750$, df, $p = <. 05$). However, it was found that Hispanic MSP students took non-occupational courses in greater numbers than other minority non-MSP students. The MSP Hispanic students’ choice to enroll in non-occupational courses in comparison to other minority non-MSP students resulted in statistical significance ($x^2 = 7.168$, df, $p = < .05$).
Fall 2001 reflected similar patterns of course taking among Hispanic MSP students and Hispanics non-MSP (See Table 10). Both groups overwhelmingly chose courses that were non-occupational. Statistical significance was found between MSP Hispanic students and Hispanic non-MSP students in regard to taking non-occupational courses ($x^2 = .498$, df, $p = < .05$). As stated earlier, no Hispanic female MSP students enrolled in occupational courses in Fall 2000, but approximately 12% of Hispanic MSP females in Fall 2001 did take occupational courses. The difference between females and male Hispanic MSP students course taking habits for Fall 2001 was not statistically significant ($x^2 = .021$, df, $p = > .05$).

When comparing the percentages from the previous paragraph of Fall 2000 and Fall 2001 Hispanic MSP student’s course choices, there was a decrease in the number of occupational courses taken. On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference between the Hispanic MSP and other minority non-MSP students ($x^2 = .055$, df, $p = > .05$).

Research Question 3

The third research question was: How does course work performance (GPA) differ between MSP Hispanics and the non-MSP Hispanics? For the purpose of this study, course work performance was measured by examining the grade point averages (GPAs) of the students in the study during their first semester as members of either cohort. CCSN’s grading system follows the standard that is set for use by all community colleges in Nevada.
The Fall 2000 semester was the pilot semester for the MSP in Nevada and at CCSN as well as the pilot semester for Cohort A. Table 11 shows the GPA ranges for Cohort A at the completion of its first semester. Data were collected by GPA, ranging from less than 2.0 to 4.0.

Table 11
Cumulative GPA Breakdown – Fall 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic Students</th>
<th>Millennium</th>
<th>Non-Millennium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA Range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 – 2.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 – 2.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 – 3.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 – 3.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventeen percent (15) of the 86 Hispanic MSP students fell below the 2.0 GPA required in order to remain in the program. Of the 83% who earned a 2.0 GPA or
higher, 37% (32) earned a GPA no higher than 2.9. Fifty-four percent (38) earned a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0. In contrast, 61% (115) of the non-MSP students of Cohort A earned a GPA below 2.0 during their first semester (See Table 11). Of the 39% (74) who earned a 2.0 GPA or higher, 27% (50) earned a GPA no higher than 2.9. Thirteen percent (24) earned a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0.

Cohort B began in Fall 2001, and Table 12 shows its GPA ranges at the end of that semester. Data were collected by GPA, ranging from less than 2.0 to 4.0.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumulative GPA Breakdown – Fall 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 - 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 - 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 - 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Seventeen percent (17) of the Hispanic MSP students fell below the 2.0 GPA required to continue in the program whereas 83% (85) earned a 2.0 GPA or better. In contrast, 49% (88) of the Hispanic non-MSP students of Cohort B earned a GPA of below 2.0 during their first semester whereas only 51% (91) earned a GPA of 2.0 or better.

In order to fully answer Research Question 3, the cumulative GPA for all Hispanic MSP and Hispanic non-MSP students were computed from the letter grade awarded by their instructors. For the purpose of this study a passing GPA was 2.0 or higher, and a failing GPA was anything below 2.0. It did not surprise the researcher that Hispanic MSP students had a higher percentage of passing GPAs than Hispanic non-MSP students. Chi-square testing indicated a statistically significant finding ($\chi^2 = 42.950$, dfl, $p = < .05$). There was no statistically significant difference, between male and female Hispanic MSP students in regard to the pass/fail rate.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question was: Is there a statistically significant difference between the first and last semester grade point averages of the MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics in the study?

When Cohort A students began its first semester of study at CCSN in Fall 2000, there were 86 full-time Hispanic MSP students. Sixty-five percent (56) of these students were still enrolled two years later at the start of the Spring 2002 semester (See Table 13). Over 98% (55) of these students passed their Spring 2002 courses with a 2.0 or better GPA. In contrast, just over 56% (45) of the Hispanic non-MSP
Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA Range</th>
<th>Millennium M</th>
<th>Millennium F</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Non-Millennium M</th>
<th>Non-Millennium F</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2.0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 - 2.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 2.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.4</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 - 3.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 - 3.9</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

students in Cohort A passed with a 2.0 or better. Chi-square testing for the success of first and last semester GPAs of Hispanic MSP students versus Hispanic non-MSP students of Cohort A resulted in a statistical significance ($x^2 = 19.305$, df, p = < .05).

When Cohort B students began their first semester of study at CCSN in Fall 2001, there were 102 full-time Hispanic MSP students. Sixty-nine percent (70) of these students were still enrolled two years later at the start of the Spring 2003 semester (Sec Table 14). Slightly more than 94% (66) of these students passed their
Table 14

Cumulative GPA Breakdown for Fall 2001 – Spring 2003

Persisting Hispanic Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA Range</th>
<th>Millennium</th>
<th>Non-Millennium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 - 2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 2.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 - 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 - 3.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spring 2003 courses with a 2.0 or better GPA. In contrast, approximately 63% (49) of the Hispanic non-MSP students in Cohort B passed with a 2.0 or better GPA. Chi-square testing for the success of first and last semester GPA’s of Hispanic MSP students versus Hispanic non-MSP students of Cohort B resulted in statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 19.305$, df, $p = < .05$).
Research Question 5

The fifth research question was: Is there a statistically significant difference in persistence in regards to: a) MSP Hispanic males and females compared to non-MSP Hispanic students regardless of gender; b) MSP Hispanic males to non-MSP Hispanic males; c) MSP Hispanic females to non-MSP Hispanic females?

The three parts of this question were answered by the data in Tables 1 and 2. These two tables have already been used to address the four previous questions of this study.

Research Question 5a. Approximately 69% of the Hispanic (both male and female) MSP students in Cohort A persisted to Fall 2001. A lower rate of Hispanic (both male and female) non-MSP students (57%) persisted to Fall 2001. Chi-square testing resulted in a statistical significance ($x^2 = 3.068$, df, $p = <.05$) between the relationship of being in the MSP and persisting. A comparison of Hispanic MSP and non-MSP students from Fall 2001 to 2002 also resulted in a very statistically significant difference ($x^2 = 7.557$, df, $p = <.05$) when it came to being an MSP scholar and persisting in college.

Research Question 5b. When determining if there was a significant difference between only the male students of Cohorts A and B, chi-square testing indicated that there was not a statistical significance between gender (maleness) and persistence ($x^2 = 1.604$, df, $p = >.05$).

Research Question 5c. When determining if there was a significant difference between the female students of Cohorts A and B, chi-square testing indicated that
there was not a significant statistical difference between gender (femaleness) and persistence ($x^2 = 3.418$, df, $p > .05$).

Summary

The findings of this study were the result of a review of statistical information that was received from several sources.

This study found that more Hispanic MSP females were enrolled than males, but there was no statistical significance as far as persistence by gender or in comparison to the MSP females of other ethnicities. There was statistical significance, however, with the figures indicating that Hispanic MSP females were enrolled into non-occupational courses at a higher rate than the Hispanic MSP males.

This study also discovered that Hispanic MSP males of both cohorts were enrolled in non-occupational courses at a higher rate than non-MSP males of other minority ethnicities. Statistical significance was found in regard to the number of Hispanic MSP students who were taking non-occupational courses in comparison to Hispanic non-MSP students.

When comparisons were made between Hispanic MSP students and Hispanic non-MSP students, a statistical significance was found in regard the MSP participants enrolling into non-occupational courses at a higher rate. Significance was also true for the number of Hispanic MSP students taking non-occupational courses in comparison to the students of other minorities who were not participating in the MSP.
Determination of the influence and impact of the various support mechanisms made available by CCSN to the students in the MSP was also of interest to this study. First and last semester GPAs of Hispanic MSP students in comparison to the GPAs of Hispanic non-MSP students were revealed a statistical significance in both cohorts.

The persistence rate of Hispanic students who were participants in the MSP was a primary purpose of this study. Hispanic MSP students at CCSN, in both Cohort A and Cohort B, tended to persist at a higher rate than Hispanic students who were not participating in the MSP. Additionally, Hispanic MSP students in both cohorts persisted at a higher rate than MSP students of other ethnicities as well as Hispanic non-MSP students.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The intent of this study was to examine the success of the Hispanic Millennium Scholarship Program participants at CCSN between the academic years of 2000 and 2003. This study compared the overall academic success of the Hispanic MSP students with Hispanic non-MSP students.

The participants in this study were 556 Hispanic students enrolled full-time between the academic years 2000 and 2003. There were two cohorts. Cohort A was comprised of 275 Hispanic students of which 86 were in the MSP and 189 were non-MSP. These students began their studies at CCSN in the fall of 2000. Cohort B was comprised of 281 Hispanic students of which 102 were in the MSP and 179 were non-MSP. These students began their studies at CCSN in the fall of 2001.

Overview of the Study

The purposes of this research study were to compare Hispanic MSP students to Hispanic non-MSP students in regard to persistence, course taking differences, and course work performance (GPA). Additionally, this study aimed to determine if there were statistically significant differences: 1. between the first and last semester
GPAs of Hispanic MSP students and Hispanic non-MSP students, and 2. between designated groups based on gender.

The data were analyzed to yield descriptive statistics of the subject in the two cohorts and were also used to make comparisons between the Hispanic MSP and Hispanic non-MSP populations attending CCSN as full-time students. Cross tabulations were used to explore relationships in the data, and chi-square tests further examined relationships between the cohorts and their sub-groups.

Conclusions

Research Question #1: How does year to year persistence of full time MSP Hispanics compare with non-MSP Hispanics during the first year of each cohort?

Cohort A’s first year involved semesters Fall 2000 and Spring 2001. Sixty percent (166) of the 275 full-time Hispanic students persisted as defined in this study. Of the 166 persisters, 35% (59) were Hispanic MSP students, and 65% (107) were Hispanic non-MSP students. A further breakdown indicated that 68% (59) of the Hispanic MSP students were persisters whereas only 56% (107) of the Hispanic non-MSP students persisted.

Cohort B’s first year involved semesters Fall 2001 and Spring 2002. Fifty-nine percent (167) of the 281 full-time Hispanic students persisted as defined by this study. Of the 167 persisters, 43% (72) were Hispanic MSP students, and 57% (95) were Hispanic non-MSP students. A further breakdown indicated that 70% (72) of the Hispanic MSP students were persisters whereas only 53% (95) of the Hispanic non-MSP students persisted. The MSP appeared to produce a higher success for the
Hispanic full-time students than for those Hispanic students who were not in the MSP.

Research Question #2: How does course taking differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics? In Cohort A approximately 89% of the Hispanic MSP students were enrolled into “all” or enrolled “mostly” into non-occupational courses, and only 4% of these students enrolled into “mostly” or “all” occupational courses. In contrast, Cohort A’s Hispanic non-MSP students enrolled into non-occupational courses at the approximate rate of 66%, and they enrolled into occupational courses at the rate of approximately 36%.

Approximately 75% of the Hispanic MSP students in Cohort B were enrolled into “mostly” or “all” non-occupational courses. Only 12% of these students enrolled into “mostly” or “all” occupational courses. In contrast, Cohort B’s Hispanic non-MSP students enrolled in non-occupational courses at the rate of 61% and occupational courses at the rate of approximately 25%.

The above data indicated that Hispanic MSP students were generally following an academic (non-occupational) track. A possible explanation for this occurrence might be due to the advisement process in the MSP. However, Hispanic non-MSP students were more likely to be advised into an occupational track, possibly leading to a terminal two year degree.

Research Question #3: How does course work performance (GPA) differ between MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics? In Cohort A, approximately 17% of Hispanic MSP students earned GPAs below 2.0 whereas 83% of the Hispanic MSP students earned GPAs of 2.0 or better. On the other hand, 61% of the Hispanic non-
MSP students of Cohort A earned a GPA below 2.0, and only 39% of them earned a 2.0 or better GPA.

In Cohort B, approximately 17% of the Hispanic MSP students earned GPAs below 2.0 while 83% of them earned GPAs at or better than 2.0. Conversely, approximately 49% of Cohort B’s Hispanic non-MSP students earned GPAs below 2.0 with 51% of those earning GPAs at or better than 2.0.

The success rate of the Hispanic MSP student is probably due to the relationship between these groups and the College’s Millennium Office staff, Counseling staff, Retention Office staff and other resources used to ensure the result. The same efforts were not implemented in regard to the Hispanic non-MSP groups. This may be an indication as to where the philosophy of the Vroom theory, which was discussed in Chapter 1, was evidenced. The Hispanic MSP students responded and rose to the level of expectation of the college.

**Research Question #4: Is there a statistically significant difference between the first and last semester grade point average of MSP Hispanics and non-MSP Hispanics in the study?** Approximately 98% of the Hispanic MSP students in Cohort A who persisted into Spring 2003 were passing their course work with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better. Similarly, approximately 95% of the Hispanic MSP students in Cohort B were earning a 2.0 or better GPA. There was a statistical significance between Hispanic MSP participation and performance level in course work for Cohort B only ($x^2 = 19.305, df=1, P = <.05$).
It was advantageous for MSP Hispanic students to remain in the program. Of course, this again reflects the level of commitment made by the college towards the MSP and not toward students outside the MSP.

Research Question #5: Is there a statistically significant difference in persistence in regards to: a) MSP Hispanic males and females compared to non-MSP Hispanic students regardless of gender; b) MSP Hispanic males to non-MSP Hispanic males; c) MSP Hispanic females to non-MSP Hispanic females? To summarize the findings to question 5, Hispanic students who were in the MSP tended to persist at a rate higher than Hispanic students who were not part of the program. The relationship between MSP status and persistence was found to be statistically significant. When comparing GPAs between the first and last semesters of course taking for Hispanic MSP students and Hispanic non-MSP students in both cohorts, a statistical significance was found between Hispanic MSP males and Hispanic non-MSP males and success in courses taken. Hispanic MSP and Hispanic non-MSP students were also looked at in regard to gender and persistence. It was found that female Hispanic MSP students persisted at a higher rate than female Hispanic non-MSP students; however, the relationship of persistence and female gender was not statistically significant.

The MSP appears to have been highly beneficial to the Hispanic students who participated in it. Hispanic males seemed to benefit from participation in the program as their success rate showed a statistically significant difference. Hispanic female students, however, did not appear to benefit as greatly. Chi-square testing reinforced this assumption.
Overall, it appears that the MSP has had positive effects on the Hispanic students who participated in it. Hispanic students who graduated from high school and then entered college as scholars in the MSP were more likely to be successful in college than the Hispanic students who enrolled in college without the benefits of the MSP.

Discussion

When the researcher was working at New Mexico State University as an Assistant Director of Financial Aid, his office had a desert view of the new football stadium. The university decided this was going to change and added considerable resources to the problem. Low and behold, grass grew and remained beautiful. A comment made by one of the groundskeepers was, “With the amount of fertilizer and the other chemicals applied around the stadium, one could have grown grass in the bed of a pick-up.” What does this story have to do with the study? The MSP had received considerable attention from the governor, chancellor, president, and down the line, and each Student Services division at each institution was told to make it a success. The Chancellor’s Office even collected data concerning this program yearly. CCSN was highly optimistic about the MSP and saw to it that considerable resources were applied to the program. A Millennium Scholarship Office was created and staffed. Special orientations and tracking systems were put in place, and a correspondence system was developed. An advisement system was set up for each scholar, and the Retention Office was assigned to follow up on each scholar. Yes, the result was that the MSP student persisted well at CCSN and maintained a passing GPA. All of this occurred while the college continued to suffer one of the worst
retention rates in the state and had a minimal advisement system that continued to not be mandatory. Therefore, with the proper resources and staffing, students showed that they could succeed and grow at CCSN. However, when students such as those who were not in the MSP did not receive or seek out academic support, which was a component of the MSP, they did not fare nearly as well.

The Hispanic population in Las Vegas continued to mirror the state and country. This population grew so quickly that it could not benefit from timely responses. At CCSN, Hispanic students made up 19% of the total student population. Efforts were made to respond to this growth; these efforts must be continued as the growth continues.

Recall that in regard to the MSP and CCSN, though, no ethnic groups were targeted for success. It is only the MSP group as a whole that was the focus. This study and other studies showed that students from different ethnic groups varied in how they responded to education and to studying.

The recruitment of MSP students was mainly handled by the MSP Office. It continued to recruit MSP students as a whole instead of focusing on specific ethnic groups to increase those groups' participation at CCSN. Thus, the MSP had a higher percentage of Caucasian students than the percentage of Caucasian students in the student body at CCSN.

Advisement continued to be critical at CCSN. The MSP showed that advisement upon entering college is crucial and critical to student success. However, CCSN continued to allow students to enroll without advisement or restrictions to
classes, and the result continued to be a high failure rate. This fact was apparent at CCSN, but it was not responded to since taking action would call for more resources.

Similar to the Civil Rights Study which was discussed earlier, the MSP appeared to have been designed mainly for the middle class student who had already planned on attending college after high school. The state’s plan to increase its “high school-to-college” rate had not been a success since most of the MSP participants came from families that earned in the $75,000 dollar income range and were Caucasian in ethnicity. What happened instead was that the “choice” by these students had changed.

The Clark County School District continued to have a low rate of sending its graduates to college, and the MSP had so far not changed this fact. This occurrence was also found with New Mexico’s and Georgia’s state scholarship programs, and Nevada followed suit. The MSP in Nevada appeared to be of benefit to the middle class, Caucasian student; the impact was not on determining whether a prospective student chose college or not but rather on where the student attended (type of institution).

It appears that Hispanic parents of the new millennium students were supportive of the efforts of their children to attend college and pursue their dreams of a higher education. However, for reasons not revealed in this study, Hispanic students at CCSN tended to enroll in occupational/vocational courses instead of non-vocational courses as they faced their educational challenges on the way to changing their futures and the futures of their families.
According to the literature discussed in Chapter 2, Hispanic students could and did succeed along with other students when given the proper resources to survive. CCSN had the resources and departments to respond to the challenge, and it assisted the Hispanic students to succeed when they were participants in the MSP. Hispanic students who were not in the MSP at CCSN would no doubt have prospered academically in greater numbers if they would have been given the same support and resources as MSP students.

Recommendations

It is the recommendation of the researcher that the MSP be reviewed at the legislative level since changes in the original bill that became the MSP can only be altered by legislative action. A suggested change is an income ceiling on participation at no more than a $75,000 family income to ensure participation by high school graduates other than those planning to attend or already attending college. This would be a plausible resolution to the recent concerns in Nevada on how to reduce the annual expenditures of the MSP. These steps would surely respond to the MSP’s purpose of increasing Nevada’s “go-to-college” rate.

A second change in criteria to qualify for the MSP may well be warranted. High school GPA should not necessarily be the only criterion for participation; other factors should be considered such as the types of courses that were taken in high school, formal courses for college preparation, and whether a potential MSP recipient graduated from a low-ranking high school.
It is highly recommended that all recipients of the Millennium Scholarship receive mandatory advisement and midterm reviews as a requirement to remain in the program and as a tool to foster success. The college should ensure that other ethnic groups such as African American and Asian are receiving the same overall attention as the MSP scholars in this study did. CCSN can also require its departments to recruit millennium scholars in numbers that reflect its student body population, and that CCSN provides the necessary resources to assure success.

Additionally, CCSN could begin a mandatory advisement program for all of its full-time or degree seeking students as a proactive measure to increase persistence rates. CCSN should closely look at the “revolving door syndrome” of its students and devise interventions to prevent them from leaving college just as fast as they entered college. CCSN should require mandatory orientation of all students enrolling at CCSN for more than one class; the orientation should be of measurable credibility. Each student should be tracked for success just as the MSP student will be tracked for accountability of the MSP. At the same time, it would be helpful to determine which factors contribute to the success of Hispanic MSP scholars in comparison to non-MSP Hispanic scholars.

It is also recommended that a study be conducted to determine the level of support that CCSN Hispanic students receive from their families. A comparison of the responses of MSP and non-MSP Hispanic parents should be reviewed to guide in the advisement process of Hispanic students at CCSN.

The results and conclusions of this study have opened several doors for future studies. One study could be conducted to determine the success rate of the MSP
students beyond the first three years of MSP. A second study could be conducted on the transfer rate of MSP students; this same study could have one focus on the students’ choices of post-secondary institutions and a second focus on their success rates once they are at the college or university to which they had transferred.

Other studies can delve into aspects of the MSP that are not academically based. For example, it may be interesting to uncover the reasons why students who qualify for the MSP do not use the scholarship. Also, the hospitality industry is very prominent in Las Vegas, and many individuals find employment in the hospitality/gaming industry right after high school graduation instead of going to college. Research could be conducted to determine the level of support for higher education that the employers of this industry have – or do not have – for their employees.

Summary

This project was worthwhile since it had brought attention to the MSP Hispanic students and their overall academic success. It suggested that the stereotype of the Hispanic family that goes only to work and does not support college may have been replaced with young Hispanics who do have the support of their families while they attend college. If this is further studied, the findings may well reflect the sentiments that were provided in The Final Report of the Hispanic Dropout Project (1998). Fry (2002) wrote, “We have made progress in making college accessible to Latino high school graduates. The next step is to assist Latino undergraduates in finishing college” (p.14). This statement reflects the current status of Hispanic students at
CCSN, and this study showed that Hispanics in the MSP have done well. It additionally suggested that the college resources applied to a group had a positive result.

This study also indicated that a partnership formed between the MSP and CCSN can turn the wasted resources of Hispanic men and women around to foster academic success and, ultimately, success in the workplace. Education is the answer for today and will continue to be the answer in the future.
REFERENCES


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