

RETENTION AND SUCCESS OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The effectiveness of an Initiative Program that helps conditionally accepted college students succeed and stay in college was investigated. The two groups of participants (approximately 80 students) were first semester students attending Lethbridge Community College (LCC) in fall 1999 and fall 2000 semesters who had no previous post-secondary experiences. Below acceptance level computerized placement test scores were used to establish which students participated in this study. These students were conditionally accepted into the General Studies Program and would require remedial courses and additional support. An Initiative Program was the treatment for the fall 2000 participants and focused on remedial courses, social, personal, and academic issues. The fall 1999 participants were not part of the Initiative Program. Two continuous semesters for each group were compared. Success was measured according to student grade point average (GPA) scores of 1.5 or higher. Retention was measured according to registration in any LCC program in the student's second semester. The number of successful Initiative Program students increased from 59% in their first semester to 65% in their second semester. Also, 80% of Initiative Program students returned for a second semester. Although 91% of non-Initiative Program students returned for a second semester, their success rate dropped from 68% in semester one to 58% in semester two. A survey and student registration data were used to gather information for this study. Program recommendations included more communication among instructors and students and an effective way to identify Initiative students in the registration system.

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Retention and Success of First Year College Students

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Access to colleges is no longer limited to students with above average high school grades and predetermined career goals. The college population has changed, and today we are witnessing more student diversity within college campuses. Some first-year college students were not high-achievers in high school; some may not have completed high school; and others may have been out of school for many years. Yet, these students are given the opportunity to acquire post-secondary education regardless of their educational or social backgrounds. On the other hand, many of these students are lacking crucial skills, such as reading, writing, study, and time management, to assist them through their first semester of college. Hence, the failure and withdrawal rates of first-semester college students are on the rise. I believe this is the case in many colleges across Canada; however, this particular study will focus on high-risk, first-semester students at Lethbridge Community College.

General Statement of the Problem

The growing concern of failure and withdrawal of first-semester college students has prompted this research study. Statistics on students' first semester grade point average scores from 1998 to 1999 at Lethbridge Community College showed that students who had been accepted with conditions into the General Studies Program were more likely to fail two or more courses in their first semester, which in many cases led to withdrawal from college. When potential students apply to enter the General Studies Program, they are not denied acceptance if their entry exam scores are below the acceptance level. Instead, they are accepted into the Program as conditionally accepted students. In other words, they did not

meet the entry requirement scores in reading, writing and or math and were admitted under the condition that they successfully complete reading, writing or math courses in their first semester. Each semester there are approximately 70-100 students out of approximately 400 students admitted into General Studies with conditions. First-semester students who are admitted with two or more conditions average approximately 50 students per semester. If they failed to fulfill their conditions, they did not return to the General Studies Program the following semester. The reasons for poor academic performance by these conditionally accepted students were not clear; furthermore, considering the heterogeneous backgrounds and attitudes of these students, it was difficult to find a specific solution that could be applied to all first-semester students. Most importantly, the problem of failure and withdrawal of first-semester students had prompted discussion and administration of practical interventions throughout the students' first semester to try and reverse the failure and withdrawal rates.

Significance of the Study

In an attempt to reverse failure rates and reduce the risk of withdrawal, the Lethbridge Community College, General Studies Program had introduced an Initiative Program, in September 2000, for conditionally accepted first-semester students. The basis for this study was to determine whether or not the Initiative Program was able to assist conditionally accepted students in succeeding in their first semester. Although this study may seem limited in magnitude and complexity, the outcome of the study was practical, timely and significant. For example, if the Initiative Program proved successful, it would justify any requests for future program funding to secure the continuation and improvement of the Initiative Program. Furthermore, from research conducted in looking at failure and dropout rates of college students, there seemed to be a general consensus that this issue had become a

growing concern. Consequently, this study could be significant to the broader population; other colleges may be able to consider some or all of the components of this study in their attempts to address student failure and dropout.

In addition, a healthy enrolment keeps colleges alive, and the more quality programs a college has to offer the better its chances of raising and sustaining its enrolment. Therefore, the promotion of an effective Initiative Program could also be a valuable recruitment tool for the college. The increased enrolment of mature, high-risk, high-needs students in college education and the lack of current research on this topic makes this study timely and important for the success of these students.

Research Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that over two academic semesters the success, measured as >1.49 grade point average, and retention, measured as continued enrolment for a second semester, of the Initiative Program students will be higher than that of students with similar entry conditions who did not participate in the Initiative Program.

Research Objectives and Questions

The Initiative Program began in September 2000. The objective of this study was to evaluate and determine the effectiveness of the Initiative Program. In determining the Program's effectiveness, my research considers a variety of factors such as the students' credit load, the students' demographic information, the types of courses they took aside from the condition courses, and their grade point average scores over two semesters. For example, I wanted to know if a full-time, strictly academic, course load (15 credits) had a negative effect on the students' success. If so, should we reduce the academic credit load in their first semester? Another question I needed to answer was whether or not the success rate of

returning students increased or decreased with the addition of the Initiative Program. Other questions that may have impacted the success of Initiative Program students were factors that may have influenced academic performance. Some questions in the area of student/instructor relations were (a) “How important was communication with their instructors?”, (b) “What specific skills and intervention did these students need in their first semester?”, and (c) “Did the teaching styles conflict with student learning styles?”. Other questions tried to determine personal factors, such as (a) “Did the students become homesick?”, (b) Was motivation higher for students who had career goals?”, (c) “Did a sense of belonging reduce the risk of withdrawal?”, and (d) “What impact did the desire to create new peer relationships have on student success?”. The answers to these questions were nearly as numerous as the number of students affected by them. However, the answers to these questions were important in evaluating the Initiative Program on a more personal level and are mentioned in this project.

The student survey (see Appendix A) is a useful instrument in collecting data in response to the above questions. In reporting the effectiveness of the Initiative Program, the initial consideration was data, such as grade point average scores, credit load, final grades, number of courses failed, and number of courses students withdrew from. Once the data was calculated and summarized, I then considered the survey questions to help me interpret why the data may have represented what it did. The objectives of this study were met through weekly interaction with students in the Initiative Program, periodic discussions with colleagues, and practical administration of the Initiative Program. Finally, once the objectives were met, the data collected from the Initiative Program students (September 2000) were compared to conditionally accepted students (September 1999) who did not participate in the Initiative Program to determine if the Initiative Program was effective in reversing the failure

and withdrawal rates. Other than the Initiative Program, which was the treatment for this study, the General Studies program and acceptance procedures were the same in 1999 and 2000.

Definition of Terms

Computerized placement test: This test was designed by Educational Testing Services. When students applied to enter the General Studies Program at Lethbridge Community College their high school transcripts and or results from admissions testing were considered. The computerized placement test was administered to students whose high school transcript grades were borderline or below acceptable levels, or to students who had been out of school for a few years. The computerized placement test determined a student's entry level in reading comprehension, sentence skills, arithmetic and elementary algebra. Students who did not achieve a minimum 60th percentile in reading comprehension and sentence skills and a minimum 50th percentile in arithmetic and elementary algebra were considered for conditional acceptance into the General Studies Program.

Conditionally accepted students: Students who did not meet the computerized placement test requirements were admitted into the General Studies Program on the condition that they successfully complete the courses needed to achieve the percentile scores they were deficient in. For example, if a student scored in the 50th percentile in reading comprehension, that student would be required to successfully complete Reading 101 in his or her first semester. For this particular research project, I only worked with conditionally accepted students who had two or more conditions to meet. In other words, a conditionally accepted student was one who was required to take two or more of the following courses: Reading 101, English 101, or Math 102.

Initiative Program: The Initiative Program started in September 2000 and was specifically designed to assist conditionally accepted students while in their first semester. The goal of this Program was to provide academic and social support and assistance to conditionally accepted students. A conditionally accepted student automatically participated in this Program. Participation in the Initiative Program was defined as any first-semester student with two or more conditions registering in a compulsory support course—College Success 120. Most important, for this study the only conditionally accepted students involved were those who had no previous post-secondary education experiences.

College Success 120 (COL120): This course was originally called Independent Study 151, and it was changed to College Success 120 after the first semester of the Initiative Program. Initiative Program students had to register in this one-credit course as part of their first semester requirements. The students met once a week for 50 minutes to complete the objectives of this course, and the course ran parallel to their other courses for the 16-week semester. The objectives focused on student motivation, vision, study skills, interpersonal skills, personal awareness, and learning to learn. The curriculum and instruction for this course gave deliberate attention to student orientation to the college environment and to academic learning processes. For example, student orientation included information on student services, important dates to remember, how to calculate grades, how to self-monitor progress, and ‘unwritten’ rules involving attendance and instructor/student relations. Academic learning processes focused on learning styles, test-taking skills, study skills, memory skills, and time management skills. There were homework assignments given throughout the semester such as collecting progress reports from the instructors of their other courses, gathering information on exam content from other courses, and keeping a journal on

topics provided by the COL120 instructor. In other words, the homework assignments focused on reinforcing particular behaviours such as handing in assignments on time and time management. This course also served as a vehicle for the instructional team, advisors, counselors and Students' Association members to collaborate throughout the semester to ensure Initiative Program students received information, assistance and guidance necessary for success and mobility.

Successful completion of COL120 was defined as achieving a final grade of 90% or higher (see Appendix B for COL120 course outline). Considering the track record of these students, the 90% requirement for COL120 seems high; however, reinforcing attendance, self-reflection and handing in assignments on time makes up the grading for this course. For example, 50% of the final grade is strictly for attendance, 40% is for evidence of self-reflection in the journal writing, and 10% is for handing in (on time) whatever assignments were given. Students who attended class regularly and simply completed the assignments required of them were able to succeed with a final grade of 90% for COL120. In other words, success in COL120 can be achieved if regular attendance and written self-reflection are developed and maintained throughout this course. Successful students were given a final transcript grade of CR (credit) for COL120, and unsuccessful students were given a grade of NCR (non-credit). Any student who failed to achieve a credit final grade did not continue in the General Studies Program the following semester. Since all Initiative Program students are required to register in COL120, the official enrolment total for the Initiative Program was taken from the COL120 enrolment.

Full-time Initiative Program status: Students who registered in and maintained a minimum of 15 credits were considered full-time status. Initiative Program students

registered in their required courses as well as two to three additional courses of their choice. Some of the popular additional courses included Psychology, Logic, Sociology, History, Computers, Physical Education and introductory courses from other college programs such as Criminal Justice or Business Administration. For this study, I only considered conditionally accepted students who were initially registered in 15 or more credits at the beginning of the semester, although some of those students may have dropped to part-time status by the end of the semester.

Grade point average: At the end of each semester, a student's grade point average reflected the number of credits received in each course in relation to the total number of credits taken. A final grade of credit or non-credit, as issued for COL120, was not calculated into the student's grade point average. The grade point averages of Initiative Program students were compared to the grade point averages of conditionally accepted students, from the previous semester, who did not participate in the Initiative Program.

Academic probation: If a student's grade point average fell below 1.5, he or she was placed on academic probation the following semester. Some Initiative Program students were successful in passing their required courses, but failed some of their other courses. Successful completion of required courses meant those students were able to continue in the General Studies Program the following semester, but if their grade point average at the end of their first semester was below 1.5, they were placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation needed to increase their grade point averages in the following semester or they were academically disqualified. The data collected for this study reflected all conditionally accepted students (Initiative Program and conditionally accepted non-Initiative Program) who were placed on academic probation.

Academic disqualification: Students, on academic probation, who were unable to increase their grade point averages to above 1.49 were disqualified. Disqualification meant the student was unable to return to the General Studies Program the following semester. If the student wished to return to the Program, he or she had to reapply. The data collected for this study also reflected students who were academically disqualified.

Withdrawal: Withdrawal from a course was defined as written in the Lethbridge Community College's grade policy. In other words, a student's grade point average was not affected by a course he or she withdrew from by the predetermined semester withdrawal date. Initiative Program students were not allowed to withdraw from their required courses (Reading 101, English 101, Math 102, or College Success 120).

Administrative fail: An administrative fail grade was defined as written in the Lethbridge Community College's grade policy. This grade was issued to students who violated the course attendance policy and was issued at the discretion of the course instructor. An administrative fail grade was reflected in the student's grade point average.

Successful completion: Success was defined as any student who achieved a grade point average of 1.5 or higher. On individual required courses, such as English 101 or Reading 101, success was defined as achieving a final grade of 60%, which was translated into a D letter grade, or higher. Successful completion of College Success 120 was predetermined at 90% or higher.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Increasing rates of withdrawal and failure of first-semester college students have prompted many colleges and universities to take a closer look at their student populations to try and determine if there is anything their institutions can do to reverse this trend. Some of the topics discussed in the literature included retention programs, review of admissions processes, studies on withdrawal rates in Canada, and factors that may have hindered student success.

Much of the literature on student-success programs dealt with institutions in the United States with very little information pertaining to Canadian student-success programs. It was difficult to locate current Canadian information on this topic; I am assuming that many institutions are currently conducting their own research or developing student-success programs and have not yet published their results. Although some of the literature I found was dated 1975, I still realized that some of the tenets in the literature were relevant today, even though the student population has changed significantly over the past 25 years. One example of a tenet that has withstood time is that the critical period for student success was in the student's first semester. Discovering literature that spanned the last 25 years has also made me realize that this problem of failure and withdrawal is not something new, and continues to be researched.

Literature and Comments on Integration

Integration Research

In research conducted by Tinto (1975), Tinto modeled his 'drop-out' model of college students after Durkheim's theory of suicide. That is, suicide within a society

increased with the lack of sufficient integration and collective affiliation; similarly, dropping out of college may also be attributed to this lack of integration and affiliation (Tinto, 1975). Tinto goes on to explain that, “the model argues that it is the individual’s integration into the academic and social systems of the college that most directly relates to his continuance in that college” (p. 96). Kezar (1997) also wrote about the importance of integration and involvement if students are to experience success in college. Furthermore, Kezar explained that factors such as homesickness, employment off campus as opposed to on campus, transitional difficulties from high school to college, and unexpected expectations were the results of lack of integration and involvement. In other words, students who are involved become integrated, and integration fosters a sense of belonging that could address homesickness, transitional difficulties and unexpected expectations. Involvement and integration do not begin and end with course content; instead, they also include social aspects of college and feeling at home with peers, faculty, support staff, and learning environment.

Integration and Hodges & Dochen, (1999)

Similarly, Southwest Texas State University (Hodges, Dochen, 1999) implemented a freshman program to assist conditionally admitted freshmen in the integration process at their university. The support program incorporated seminars and courses such as college orientation, academic support systems, effective learning, and seminars that focused on self-concept and education. The courses and seminars of this program are clearly related to helping students understand the academic and social systems of the institution.

Integration and Nelson (1985)

In Nelson’s (1985) article on dropout prevention, Nelson listed many characteristics of the typical dropout. Three significant points connected the lack of integration to dropping

out: “A feeling of not sharing a sense of ‘belonging’ to the high school as a whole, a tendency to avoid talking with school personnel about dropping out because they doubt it will help or because they do not know whom to contact; a feeling of losing interest in school and a belief that school personnel have lost interest in them” (para.6). Nelson’s research was based on high school students; however, I believe the above mentioned dropout characteristics to be parallel with those of college students. For instance, many college students begin their first semester knowing very few, if any, students, and this could account for a feeling of alienation and disconnection with the college environment. Furthermore, college students may not seek out advisors for advise because of not knowing where to go or because of past negative experiences with school teachers and administration.

Integration and Kronick (1994)

Also in support of integration relative to academic achievement, in Kronick’s (1994) article, Hirschi argued that delinquency was usually lessened if the student was able to bond with the school. Hirschi (in Kronick,1994) also mentioned, “the school is seen as a central, socializing agent of appropriate norms and values” (para. 16). In other words, the more a student can integrate into his or her college or university the higher his or her chances of academic success.

Integration and Kerka (1995)

Tinto’s (1975) model of integration and increased retention was described in Kerka’s (1995) article, and stressed the importance of social integration in retaining Adult Basic Education students. Kerka’s article also described how MacKinnon-Slaney developed the Adult Persistence in Learning Model based on Tinto’s integration model. The Adult Persistence in Learning Model combines personal issues, academic issues, and

social/environmental issues to address some of the more complex issues surrounding adult students. Since many adult students participate more in community life than in campus life, social and community integration into their educational pursuits seem paramount for the retention of adult students (Kerka, 1995).

Integration Relative to Student Success

Based on Tinto's (1975) argument that student integration and continuance were directly related, I assumed that a crucial component of the Initiative Program was to ensure students were introduced and familiarized more than their course syllabi in their first semester. In other words, successful integration into the academic and social systems of a post-secondary institution meant providing students with necessary 'written' and 'unwritten' rules of being a successful student. Therefore, the College Success 120 course, mandated through the General Studies Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College, tried to focus on students becoming familiar with available student services, informing students on where to go for certain needs and questions, and raising the students' interests in extra-curricular activities. Basically, encouraging students to get involved in all aspects of college life was believed to keep students motivated and in attendance.

Because of the heterogeneous nature of conditionally accepted adult students in the Initiative Program, integration was important; however, for the adult students, support and information gathering focused on such things as emergency daycare support, juggling their work schedule around their school schedule, finding quality time with family, or discovering quick "pocket" study strategies.

Literature and Comments on Withdrawal Rates

Often, the term 'withdrawal' is loosely used to define any student who fails to return to his or her academic program or institution, regardless of his or her academic standing at the time of withdrawal. Furthermore, many authors in the literature were reluctant to deal with their interpretation and definitions of withdrawal and dropping out. Withdrawal statistics represent negative information as far as student enrolment numbers are concerned. However, in studying some of the influences that may prompt student withdrawal, the possible reasons why students withdraw become the main focus. In other words, for my study of Initiative Program students, I need to address some of the deficient areas in a student's academic program to deter withdrawal. Three critical questions come to mind: "Did the student withdraw because of academic failure?" and "Did the student voluntarily withdraw because of non-academic concerns?"

Harvie and Fair's (1969) Study on Withdrawal Rates.

Harvie and Fair (1969) conducted a study that focused on a sample of students who had withdrawn from the University of Alberta and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in 1968. One portion of the study dealt with descriptive data and the other portion on reasons given for withdrawal and plans to continue.

Harvie and Fair (1969) study sample and method. Harvie and Fair selected their sample group from 504 undergraduate withdrawals from the University of Alberta who were enrolled full time in the 1967-68 term, but were not enrolled in fall 1968. The first and every third names were selected from the list of 504 undergraduates. For the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 176 withdrawals were selected according to the 1967-68 withdrawal

records; the names were alphabetized, and the first and every alternate name was chosen for the study.

First a withdrawal questionnaire was administered to the sample groups from each institution. The recipients of the questionnaire were divided into three groups: group one were University of Alberta students from all faculties except the Faculty of Education who withdrew after completing at least two years of study; group two consisted of University of Alberta students who had completed at least two years of study in the Faculty of Education; groups three was made up of Northern Alberta Institute of Technology students who withdrew from the institute.

Harvie and Fair's (1969) study results. The withdrawal study conducted at the University of Alberta and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology went into great detail, and the questionnaire, dealt with factors that may have influenced student withdrawal, such as cost, marriage, etc. Most important, Harvie and Fair were careful to add that many withdrawal reasons were not negative and that students were often happy with the choices they made. In addition, Harvie and Fair's study could not determine the extent to which withdrawal was permanent.

Comments on Harvie and Fair's (1969) study. It was reassuring to know that Harvie and Fair did not cast all withdrawals in a negative light. In other words, readers cannot generalize from this study that all withdrawals are negative in terms of student satisfaction. Furthermore, particular reasons or influences for withdrawal cannot be applied across all populations or institutions. This study only represented two institutions in Canada, and some of the reasons and influences may not apply to other institutions. Although this study was

somewhat dated, I would argue that students, today, who voluntarily withdraw from college or university, have reasons that are not always negative in nature or due to academic failure.

Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) Canadian Student Withdrawal Research

When looking at withdrawal rates in Canadian universities, Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) were not sure about the severity of this issue in Canada. They added that this did not indicate there was not a withdrawal problem, but instead, assumed a possible reluctance of Canadian institutions to publish data on the topic of withdrawal. Or possibly, research data on this topic had been mostly conducted on American soil, and Canada had been lumped into their context. Pascal and Kanowitch decided to study various Canadian institutions.

Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) study sample and method. In 1977, Pascal and Kanowitch began their study by sending out letters defining the purpose of their study to 51 universities across Canada. In 1978, a follow-up letter was sent to those universities who did not respond to the initial letter; 48 universities responded. Of the 48 universities, 20 claimed they had never conducted and were not presently conducting a student withdrawal study. The other universities indicated they either conducted studies from 1973-74; prior to 1973-74; or were currently engaged in withdrawal studies.

Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) categorized all the studies under four headings: statistical, causal, multivariate, and personality. Detail was given in their study as to which responding university used which type of study methodology. Other areas Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) focused on included, when students withdrew, why students withdrew, student withdrawal by program, and other variables such as sex, grade point average scores, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) study results and discussion. In analyzing the results, Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) found that the variety of methodologies inhibited the development of a detailed comparative analysis of the results. These researchers concluded in saying that there was a lack of uniformity in the way research was conducted at the responding universities on this topic; therefore, it was difficult to correlate the withdrawal information accurately. For example, some studies looked at only full time students; others examined part time and full time students. There also seemed to be an absence of consensus on defining withdrawal. However, Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) did indicate that the magnitude and mere fact that there were studies being conducted led to the assumption that withdrawal was becoming a concern for many institutions.

Comments on Pascal and Kanowitch (1979) study. This study was very labour intensive in nature. I think if Pascal and Kanowitch had designed their own information gathering tool, with specific criteria predetermined, and submitted it to Canadian universities, they would have had more useful data to work with. I did consider Pascal and Kanowitch's areas of focus for my research study on Initiative Program students: when students withdrew, why students withdrew, withdrawal by program, sex, and grade point averages. Instead of using Pascal and Kanowitch's focus on socioeconomic background for my study, I modified it to demographic information. My objective for this modification was to determine possible students stressors pertaining to homesickness, newly acquired independence, roommate relationships, and financial concerns. I believe these researchers did come to an important conclusion; and that is, withdrawal is a concern for many institutions.

Kerka (1995) and Recent Withdrawal Information on Adult Basic Education

Kerka (1995) argued that attrition was the number one problem in Adult Basic Education. In her report, she mentioned that in 1995, Quigley reported attrition rates as high as 60-70% in state and federal statistics. Kerka (1995) also stated that interpreting the statistics in isolation was similar to only seeing half the picture. For example, because of the nature of the background of adult students, some may stop attending school for a short period of time and return when their family or work issues have been sorted out. This cycle of dropping in and dropping out of school may not be clearly indicated in attrition or retention statistics.

Another possible misinterpretation of only considering raw data is that reasons for high attrition rates do not always point to academic failure. According to Hamann (Kerka, 1995), “one cause of early withdrawal is a gap between learner expectations and reality. Adult learners may get frustrated early by lack of progress, or they are not given enough information before enrolment to know when to expect change and what they must do to achieve it” (in Kerka, 1995, para. 5). In other words, a student’s initial decision to withdraw from school was not always based on academic failure. For example, the mature student’s ideal vision of education may be quite different from reality; the student may find it difficult to accept school if school reminds them of negative experiences in his or her past education; some mature students may ‘dropout’ because of a fear of failure or a fear of not being able to handle the demands of higher education and family. Mature students often have a difficult decision to make if their being in school has a negative impact on the other aspects of their lives. So although mature students may be motivated to obtain a higher education and have a

career goal in mind, the decision to stay in school through to completion may not be a choice if it has a negative impact on their current life situations.

Comments on Withdrawal and Initiative Program Students

It is inevitable that all students will not continue at one post-secondary institution to fulfill the requirements for a certificate, diploma or degree. For the General Studies Initiative Program students at Lethbridge Community College, many students did not complete their General Studies certificate or diploma because they planned to enroll in another college program, such as Criminal Justice, or they transferred to another institution such as the University of Lethbridge. Often times these students only completed the necessary General Studies courses to give them the required skills necessary for full admission into another program or institution. For example, if a student applied to enter the Criminal Justice program at Lethbridge Community College and discovered that his or her writing and reading skills did not meet the requirements for that program, he or she would have to complete those courses in the General Studies program before he or she would be accepted into the Criminal Justice program. Students can often meet this type of requirement in one semester of General Studies. In other words, the reasons students leave a program or institution may not necessarily be a result of 'quitting' their educational endeavors.

Conversely, some Initiative Program students withdrew from the Program for personal reasons such as homesickness, financial debt, steady employment, or newly-found relationships. I also believe there were a number of students who withdrew from college because they had not established clear career goals, and this often resulted in them questioning the validity of their attendance at college. The one area a college would have control over in reducing withdrawal rates would be if the student withdrew because he or she

felt unprepared for class work, was uninformed about the program or courses, or lacked in adequate study and time management skills. The reasons why students fail to return to a post-secondary program could be numerous and not always known to educators or researchers. And I am not certain that educators can address, or should address all of those reasons in an attempt to keep students actively enrolled in a particular program or institution through to completion.

High School Studies of Dropouts That May Impact College Admissions

Comments on Relevance of High School Studies

In the literature, there were relatively few studies pertaining to high schools regarding their high dropout rates. I considered a small number of the high school studies because I needed to know if a high school student's academic performance and behaviours would affect college education regardless of the difference in the number of years a student was out of school. Furthermore, I wanted to know if some of the reasons why students lost interest in high school could be relevant to reasons why college students lost interest in post-secondary education. Furthermore, some literature for both groups focused on how to keep students in school. Some of the intervention strategies offered in the high school studies could be considered and modified to meet the needs of the General Studies Initiative Program students.

In many instances, it is fair to say that high school students are a more homogenous group than college students. High school students are often with the same students through primary school and high school; within each grade level there is often no more than a two-year difference in age; and high school students attending a particular neighbourhood school share a relatively similar socioeconomic background. On the other hand, college students

make up a more heterogeneous group. The age of college students knows no limit; often times college students relocate to attend a chosen college; and there may be a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds among college students. Although these differences between high school students and college students seem irrelevant, there is a common denominator between the two groups of students. In both cases, students did not complete their education at the same institution they began in.

Ultimately, my concern for the high rate of dropouts in high school does influence my study of conditionally accepted General Studies Initiative Program students. The high school students who drop out of high school may realize, after trying to secure a satisfactory job, the importance of education. Maturity or dissatisfaction with job security could prompt many high school dropouts or low achievers to consider a college education. Mature 'drop-ins' or low achievers reconsidering an education in a college setting would impact the numbers and types of admissions into college programs. Even if these students were admitted into a college program, there would have to be special support for this particular group to provide an opportunity for their success.

Furthermore, since reentry, for mature 'drop-ins' or low achievers, is not mandatory as high school education was, college admission's officers could assume these students were serious and self-motivated about their educational pursuits. However, some concerns still remain; these students may be lacking in basic academic and social skills. In other words, high dropout rates in high schools could indicate increased future enrolment of under-prepared, high risk students at the college level. For this reason, I found the literature on high school dropouts to be pertinent to my study on conditionally accepted Initiative Program students.

Kaplan, Peck, and Kaplan (1997) High School Study

This study relied heavily on quantitative methods and used a structural relations model that looked to clarify the relationship between negative academic experiences in junior high school and later dropout behaviour. These researchers specified intervening variables that were directly affected by negative academic experiences, which were then related to later dropout behaviour. This longitudinal analysis of academic failure and dropout relationships conducted by Kaplan, Peck and Kaplan (1997) looked at a random sample of seventh grade students from 17 junior high schools in the Houston Independent School district in 1971. The students were tested with a 201 item questionnaire three times: in spring 1971 when students were in Grade 7; in spring 1972 when in Grade 8; and in spring 1973 when in Grade 9. This was followed by home interviews, using an 810-item questionnaire, in the 1980s. The questionnaire focused on measuring psychosocial characteristics, self-reports of deviant behaviours (first three times), sociodemographic characteristics, and self-reports of life events and responses to life events (interview).

Kaplan, Peck and Kaplan (1997) high school study results. The final sample of students who were present for all four questionnaires in this study included 1,195 students. These researchers argued there was a link or relationship between attitudes, behaviour and school performance outcomes. They referred to Finn's (Kaplan, Peck & Kaplan, 1997) participation-identification model of school withdrawal; in other words, the results of this longitudinal study indicated that "interventions aimed at encouraging and enabling students to be successful achievers are more likely to improve both their academic performance and their attitudes toward school and toward academic achievement" (Kaplan, Peck & Kaplan, 1997, para. 38).

Comments on Kaplan, Peck and Kaplan (1997) high school study. The results of the above high school study indicated some support for my hypothesis that focused attention on interventions and integration of students who were conditionally accepted into the General Studies Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College should enable them to achieve success. The sample group used in Kaplan, Peck and Kaplan's (1997) study was not similar to the sample group used in my study; in their study, the sample consisted of teenagers who were mandated to attend school until age 16. In my study, the sample group ranged from ages 19-25 years old, and they attended college on a voluntary basis. Differences in age and voluntary or involuntary enrolment may have some significance as to the students' attitudes about learning and prior learning experiences that they might have. For example, a 15-year old student who must attend school regardless of attitude or academic ability may view education quite differently than a 22-year-old student who voluntarily enrolled in college to improve his or her opportunities to gain employability skills or post-secondary credentials. Furthermore, since many Initiative Program students began their first semester with limited peer relationships and a narrowed focus that inhibited their viewing of the entire college environment, it was important to consider how interventions and integration could play a crucial role in helping conditionally accepted students succeed. Also, taking into account the differences in the age factors between Kaplan, Peck and Kaplan's (1997) student sample and my student sample, the results of creating positive and worthy integration into a college atmosphere may not be consistent between their study and mine.

Nelson (1993) and High School Dropout Prevention Program

Nelson compiled information on the number of students who drop out of American high schools, the characteristics of the typical dropout, and how schools can help potential

dropouts. To help realize the high dropout rates among high school students in the United States, Nelson (1993) indicated that, “The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that about 14 percent of students who were sophomores in 1980 dropped out of school by 1982. This percentage represents over one-half million students” (para. 2). Also, Nelson (1993) provided statistics on graduation numbers based on a longitudinal study conducted from 1979 to 1982 by the Center for Human Resource Research: “some dropouts reenroll and get a diploma, while others graduate by virtue of passing a GED examination. Of 25.5 million students who graduated by 1982, 6.3 percent held a GED rather than a diploma” (para. 4). Nelson (1993) did not mention either the age when dropouts reenrolled or the age when students graduated.

In another article on school dropouts, Schwartz (1995) gave a more recent count on GED statistics: “In 1993, the 450,000 people who passed the GED tests accounted for one-seventh of the population receiving a diploma. The average age of GED candidates was 26 in that year” (para. 6). In comparing the GED statistics in 1982 and 1993, the percent of GED graduates within a graduating group had increased; according to my calculations, the percent of GED graduates in 1993 was approximately 14 percent of all graduates receiving diplomas, compared to 6.3 percent in 1982. This increase in GED graduates may indicate that a growing number of high school dropouts are “dropping” back into schools or preparatory college programs after a brief absence to complete a high school equivalency certificate. If this trend continues, over the next ten years colleges could expect increased enrolment of GED candidates and an increase in high risk, under-prepared students, in particular if “dropins” had negative high school experiences.

Nelson (1993) listed eight typical characteristics of typical dropouts, which were quite specific to the high school setting. For example, the first characteristic was “a belief that high school is a different, more difficult experience than grade school” (Nelson, 1993, para. 6). In generalizing the dropout characteristics, Nelson (1993) summarized them to be academic underachievement, social and emotional problems, performance below acceptable level, and problems with making social adjustments.

Nelson (1993) described a program that helped identify potential dropouts and ways to help them stay in school. The name of the program was Experimental Program for Orientation, and it was conducted in Aurora, Colorado at Gateway High School. In the initial year of the program, it was not as effective as predicted; most targeted students dropped out regardless of teacher support. The teachers involved in the Experimental Program for Orientation reevaluated the program. Two important modifications to that program were that potential dropouts were invited to participate in the program rather than being coerced into participating, and students already enrolled in special education programs were excluded from the Experimental Program for Orientation program. Once these modifications were in place, after one year there were positive results. Students who participated in the Experimental Program for Orientation earned grade point averages nearly a full point higher than potential dropouts not enrolled in the program. In addition, students in the Experimental Program for Orientation were truant an average of 17 class hours compared with the 96.5 class hours for students not enrolled in EXPO (Nelson, 1993). Finally, Nelson (1993) noted there was only one student in the Experimental Program for Orientation who dropped out of school.

Comments on Nelson (1993) and High School Dropout Information

First, I think Nelson's (1993) generalized dropout characteristics can be readily applied to college dropouts as well. In particular, the conditionally accepted students in the Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College enter college had similar characteristics such as reading, writing, and math scores that were below the acceptable entrance requirements and had social, financial and emotional difficulties in adjusting to a new residence, college, or life style simultaneously.

The Experimental Program for Orientation, discussed in Nelson's (1993) article, gave me insight into the Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College. For example, in my attempt to increase retention and grade point averages of conditionally accepted students, I may need to consider inviting conditionally accepted students into the Initiative Program rather than having mandatory participation. Voluntary participation may give those students a sense that they have more control over their decisions about their education, rather than the sense of the college controlling their educational decisions. In other words, conditionally accepted students who resent having to participate in the Initiative Program may begin their semester with a negative attitude towards the Program, and might not see the relevance or benefits of what the Program is attempting to do for them. Changing a student's negative or resentful attitude may take weeks or months, if it is possible to change at all, and this could be an important factor to think about when looking at low grade point averages or retention levels and the effectiveness of mandatory participation in the Initiative Program.

*Literature on High Risk Students, Programs and Interventions**High Risk Period*

There appears to be a common thread running through the literature on student withdrawal rates; that is, a majority of students who do withdraw from college will likely do so in the first year of college. For example, in a study conducted by Harvie and Fair (1969), it was noted that in 1958, the Department of Education found that of the 640 freshmen enrolled in University of Alberta degree programs, 105 failed to return for a second year. Similarly, in the same study, a review of United States literature by Marsh (Harvie, Fair, 1969) concluded that “a student’s chances of graduating are 65 percent better once he reaches his junior year than they are up to that time” (p. 17).

In a more current Canadian study by Pascal and Kanowitch (1979), there was also an indication that student withdrawal was highest in the first year. Although the withdrawal information from this literature did not define withdrawal in terms of academic failure or voluntary withdrawal, I felt it was significant to my research to realize that the first year of college was critical in regards to student success and retention. As a result, it was critical to introduce the Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College in the students’ first semester in order to take full advantage of its positive impact on student success and retention.

Knowing the importance of the critical period in determining student retention has prompted colleges to implement programs, specialized courses, interventions and modifications to existing services to try and reverse the increasing rate of student withdrawal and failure. Much of the literature focused on varieties of orientation programs to familiarize students to post-secondary education. Some literature suggested intervention strategies for

individual characteristics of high-risk students. And other literature mentioned procedural changes, such as admissions procedures, to try and address withdrawal issues.

Brawer(1996) and Orientation Programs

Brawer (1996) listed six common areas of focus, researched by Coll and VonSeggern, that orientation programs used to assist students in academic socialization. The six areas included “descriptions of college program offerings; the college’s expectations for students; information about assistance and services for examining interests, values, and abilities; encouragement to establish working relationships with faculty; information about services that help with adjustment to college; and financial aid information” (Brawer, 1996, para. 6). There were also positive results mentioned when orientation programs were completed in the first term. A study of four North Carolina community colleges was conducted by Glass and Garret, and these researchers noticed improvement in student performance after completion of the first term orientation program, regardless of age, gender, race, major, entrance exam scores or employment status (Brawer, 1996).

In addition, Nelson (in Brawer, 1996) reported Valencia Community College in Florida developed a successful extended orientation course: “Between 1987 and 1992, 81 percent of the students enrolled in the extended orientation course passed their first-term courses, compared to 56 percent of the students enrolled in other college preparatory courses and 67 percent of all other students” (para. 6). More impressive was the data presented by Nelson in this literature regarding retention: “After four terms, 65 percent of the students who enrolled in the extended orientation course were still enrolled at the college” (Brawer, 1996, para. 6).

Brawer (1996) and Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs was also mentioned as being another strategy to promote student retention. Brawer (1996) used a guidebook presented by Santa-Rita to illustrate teacher-student relationship such as systems of classroom management, typologies of student behaviour, interaction patterns, behaviours, and coping strategies. Brawer (1996) also indicated the effectiveness of peer mentoring programs in retaining students. In this type of mentoring program, peer mentors provide academic and social support. Grevatt (in Brawer, 1996) mentioned how Canada's Mohawk College applied retention strategies that included, "an assessment in the first semester to identify 'high risk' students and the development of peer tutoring" (para. 8).

The statistics compiled by Clark and others in 1995, on student retention, was presented in Brawer's (1996) article, and indicated positive results from orientation programs and mentoring programs. For example, in September 1994 a retention report on 1993 freshmen indicated, "that the at-risk students in the SELECT [mentoring] program had a 73% retention rate, compared to a 70% retention rate for students enrolled in orientation classes and a 42% retention rate for students not enrolled in orientation classes" (Brawer, 1996, para. 7). Furthermore, at Valencia Community College the retention rate was 10% higher for those students who participated in an orientation program and faculty mentoring as opposed to students who only participated in an orientation program (Brawer, 1996).

Comments on Orientation and Mentoring Programs

Using orientation programs would definitely benefit all new students to a college setting; however, for those students who enroll with skills and scores below the required entrance level, I feel orientation programs are imperative. At Lethbridge Community

College, many program areas have adopted some form of orientation program; the most common is a half-day or one-day orientation on the day just before class lectures begin. These particular orientation programs focus mainly on student expectations within the individual program, meeting the instructors, or finding out what materials, etc. are required for the program. In other words, students are given an overview of the program and its expectations. Though effective, this type of orientation program does not assist academically underprepared students; it is assumed that since the student is in the program, his or her academic requirements are at the prescribed level for the program. On the other hand, the College Success 120 course required by Initiative Program students focused on assisting conditionally accepted students in academic, personal, and social areas throughout the semester.

The mentoring programs offer a more one-on-one interaction between instructor and student or student and student. I think there is value in a peer mentoring program for the Initiative Program students; however, it may be difficult to find students who would be willing to mentor other students. In order for a peer mentoring program to be successful, the student mentors would need some training, and they would also expect some remuneration or incentive to take on a mentoring position.

Southwest Texas State University(1998) Study on Admission Processes

There was literature that focused on modifications to college and university admission processes to accommodate first-semester students who were considered to be at risk. For example, Southwest Texas State University (1998) implemented a Prediction Academic Success program that deals with new students who are considered to be academically at risk. Freshmen applicants who were considered for the Prediction Academic

Success program were those who had a high school ranking in the top three-quarters of their class or who had entrance test scores near the general admissions requirements. Student transcripts, entrance exams, resumes, and personal achievements relevant to academic potential were considered during a review process. The main objective for the review was to determine if the student could clearly demonstrate potential for academic success in their first year. This Prediction Academic Success group attended for two semesters regardless of academic performance in their first semester. The enrolment in fall 1998 for this non-contract group was 534.

In addition, students who applied to enter Southwest Texas State University (1998) and were in the fourth-quarter of their class did not go through the review process and were placed in the contract portion of the Prediction Academic Success program. This meant they entered under academic probation and had to meet certain provisions (registering in specific orientation and development courses), and students who did not meet the requirements did not return for a second semester. In fall 1998, the enrolment for this contract group was 81 students.

The third group that made up Southwest Texas State University's study was regular freshmen or independent freshmen who were not committed to any portion of the Prediction Academic Success program. The total enrolment for this group was 1682 in fall 1998.

Southwest Texas State University(1998) study: method and results. The three freshmen groups (high school ranking in top three-quarters, in fourth-quarter, and regular admission) from Southwest Texas State University were monitored and tracked over three semesters with GPA statistics collected for fall 1998 and spring 1999. Retention statistics were collected for fall 1999 and spring 1999. The results indicated that the GPA of Prediction

Academic Success contract students in fall 1998 were slightly higher (2.3) than non-contract Prediction Academic Success students (2.2), but less than regular freshmen (2.5). However, the GPA scores in spring 1999 indicated an increase in the contract group to 2.5; the retention of this particular group for spring 1999 was 69.1%, while the retention for non-contract and regular freshmen was 89.5% for each group. It is in the retention figures of fall 1999 that I saw a drop in the retention percent of the non-contract group to 66.9%, and the contract group retention fell a few points to 65.4%.

Relevance of comparison groups in Southwest Texas State University (1998) study.

After considering the data collected in this study, I could not see any relevance in using regular freshmen in their Prediction Academic Success results. Regular freshmen did not enter the college setting with the same criteria or characteristics as the Prediction Academic Success students did; the only similarity was that the three groups, used to compare GPA scores and retention percentages, were all freshmen. In other words, the regular freshmen likely had high school scores that were higher than those students who participated in the Prediction Academic Success program, so predicted success for regular freshmen was likely higher than the other two groups at the beginning of the semester. The entry conditions of the three groups were different. It seems as if the regular freshmen group had a 'head start' over the other two groups, which could indicate the higher GPA scores and retention percentage of the regular freshmen at the end of fall 1998 and spring 1999.

Furthermore, the independent variable-Prediction Academic Success contract-could not be accurately compared to Prediction Academic Success non-contract because the conditions of one or two semester enrolment were not consistent for both groups. In other words, non-contract students were allowed to remain at the university for two consecutive

semesters regardless of their academic performance in their first semester; on the other hand, contract students were dismissed after their first semester if they did not meet academic requirements. This makes a correlation between Prediction Academic Success contract and non-contract students difficult to ascertain because of inconsistent conditions and treatment between the two groups.

Unfortunately, the Prediction Academic Success program did not clearly state which program stream any of the three groups participated in during their first year. Yes, some of the courses the Prediction Academic Success contract students were required to take were mentioned in the study; however, it was unclear as to whether the non-contract group and the regular freshmen also participated in the same courses. If all participants in this Texas State University's study were in the same program stream, I would find the data to be more credible. All participants would have experienced the same conditions in their first and second semesters, regardless of their academic standing at the time of admission into the university. As a result, the statistical data gathered at the end of the two semesters would seem more relevant if it was clear that all participants were in similar programs and courses. For example, it would be difficult and unfair to compare academic performance and retention of all participants if a portion of the participants were registered in a general program and the other portion was registered in an engineering or law faculty. The prerequisites and academic histories would not be similar for admission into a general program and an engineering or law faculty, for example.

The question of defining who a freshman was at Southwest Texas State University (1998) was also overlooked in its study. A clear definition of 'freshman' in studies similar to this university's is crucial because 'freshman' does not always mean a new student

registering in his or her first semester at a new post-secondary institution. For the purpose of studying retention rates and academic performance of high-risk students, it is important to know whether or not the student has had previous post-secondary experience because his or her familiarity of post-secondary education could not be accurately compared to a student who has never had post-secondary experience. Furthermore, a student who is considered to be new at a particular institution or program would have the status of freshman, yet he or she may have transferred from another post-secondary institution or program. So I think it would be inaccurate to compare different academic and post-secondary backgrounds of a generic, undefined group of freshmen.

This study at Southwest Texas State University did provide some insight into the types of courses and requirements high-risk students may benefit from in their first semester. For example, I think the review process of academic potential would be beneficial to admissions advisors or program coordinators. Sometimes meeting and speaking with potential students provide good insight into whether or not the student is ready for post-secondary education. Looking at high school transcripts or entrance exam scores may only give part of the picture as to the potential of the student; hearing the student's goals, reasons for applying to college, and personal achievements may reveal more 'academic' information than what's written on paper.

Another component of the Southwest Texas State University's Prediction Academic Success program that was considerable were the types of courses the contract students were required to take. For example, orientation courses would provide students with important information about the institution, programs, or courses. Being familiar with their surroundings takes away much fear and apprehension common to first-semester students.

The Prediction Academic Success program also incorporated seminars that focused on self-concept and education. I found the idea of students talking with each other about themselves and their relationship to the educational environment to be a potentially good vehicle for discussing issues and problems. I think it would help students realize that many problems relating to post-secondary education are not isolated or unique.

Interpretation of Southwest Texas State University(1998) Results. The dramatic decrease in the retention rate of non-contract students from 89.5% in spring 1999 to 66.9% in fall 1999 caused some concern for me. I believe a possible reason for this drop in the non-contract group was because those students were guaranteed admission for their first two semesters, which would have been fall 1998 and spring 1999, regardless of their academic standing. In other words, the spring 1999 semester would have been their second semester, and those students were guaranteed admission that semester even if their GPA scores were low. Furthermore, some students from this non-contract group may have secured employment over the summer months and continued to work into the fall 1999 semester rather than return to university. Other students may have gone on to other post-secondary institutions, and some may have been undecided about their career goals and needed time to decide what they wanted in their futures. There was no in-depth discussion or explanation of these results in the study. Therefore, I can only predict the reasons why so many non-contract students failed to return in their third semester.

Summary of Southwest Texas State University's (1998) study. I focused much attention on this study, possibly because some of the research components were similar to my study on Initiative Program students at Lethbridge Community College. However, I found the Texas State University's study to be rather incomplete and vague in reporting its

methods, defining its participants and interpreting its data. On the other hand, their study focus was similar to my study in that they looked at the institutional process for helping students achieve academic success rather than looking at why students had a low academic standing when they applied. In other words, in the Initiative Program, I used my own discretion to decide what types of resources, skills and support conditionally accepted students needed to ensure their success in the General Studies Program. I was, however, not in a position to evaluate and determine why the conditionally accepted students' academic standings were low when they applied. In the Initiative Program study, my objective is not to assess or accommodate students' needs before they are accepted into the General Studies Program. My objective was to work with conditionally accepted students as they progressed through their first and second semesters. Finally, as mentioned earlier, some of the review processes and required courses used in the Prediction Academic Success program were worthy of consideration for the Initiative Program study at Lethbridge Community College.

Cope (1975) and College Initiative Programs

According to Cope's (1975) research it was clear that the need for college initiative programs to reduce attrition was on the rise. However, he mentioned that the problem was knowing which areas of student life to focus on and that each college was different. Cope then suggested that the best way to determine which areas were problematic was to survey students who left college as well as students who exhibited similar situations while in college. In his study, three colleges provided examples of how they addressed initiative programs to reduce attrition.

The first college in Cope's (1975) study looked at basic statistics of the numbers and percentages of entering freshmen graduating with their class over a five-year period. This

college revealed that there was no particular program it could implement to remedy the attrition rates. However, as a result of the data collected, the college did make recommendations to departments within the college.

Another college in Cope's (1975) study implemented a 'student alert system' based on results of its attrition study. The college discovered it was losing 50 percent of its students who were undecided about their majors. Therefore, the student alert system helped students focus on career counseling in order to determine a major area of study. A third college used surveys to determine what type of program would be most beneficial to its students who were at risk of withdrawing. The difficulty with using questionnaires and surveys was trying to generate appropriate questions that would provide valuable information for program coordinators. For example, this college's survey questionnaire illustrated some factors that relate to a specific institution and the feelings, concerns and difficulties of its students. The results were then demonstrated in the form of a graph, comparing the survey results of withdrawn students and persisters. Again, this survey method was useful for my study; however, my student sample and predicted problem areas were unique to Lethbridge Community College. The student population, location of the institution, and institutional programs determined the types of questions I asked on my survey and how I interpreted and used the results.

Methodology Literature Review

The methods explained in the literature were very specific to the individual institutions as to what information they wanted to gather for what purpose. In other words, the method and instruments used in the research provided results that the institutions could consider for institutional changes or modifications. When looking at retention and failure

rates, a majority of the researchers used quantitative data to determine those rates. Collection of this data was accessed through student registration and transcript information; no personal student contact was necessary. On the other hand, some researchers included some qualitative measures that included student questionnaires and surveys. Qualitative measures that are clearly and deliberately designed to address the hypothesis should shed light on personal factors that may have influenced the quantitative results. For a more comprehensive analysis of the problem, I believe a qualitative measurement needs to accompany the quantitative data.

Systems-rationalist Thought

Wignall (1998) presented this thought, credited to Fullan in 1991, 1993 and Leithwood and Steinbach in 1995, as the focus on “an ordered and predictable reality that can be objectively studied and systematically improved” (p. 302). This approach is similar to the quantitative approach in that they both exclude the researcher from in-depth personal communication with participants. Numbers, facts, and statistics are used to identify causes and look at comparisons in a logical and rational way. Wignall (1998) also made it clear that educational researcher using systems-rationalist thought, in part or entirely, are more apt to receive funding and are better able to analyze, interpret and present study results for stakeholders. However, this could mean that those individuals in ‘control’ of funding are predominantly systems-rationalist supporters rather than assuming that this approach is more effective in doing educational research.

Student tracking was another method used to help compare statistical data over time (Hess & Greer, 1986). The length of time, the amount of data collected, and use of information were determined by individual institutions, programs, or grade levels and the

objectives sought by each study (Quimbita, 1989). A simplified form of tracking was used for the conditionally accepted students in the Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College.

Theoretical/conceptual Paradigm

This paradigm was based on looking at the roles of the investigator, subject, manager, and design structure during operation of the research methodology (Beckwith, 1983). Beckwith (1983) claimed that the design structure included facilitating solutions to educational problems; attending to learners as dynamic individuals; and to operationalize reliability and validity of the research. I suspect this somewhat on-going evaluation process would require the formation of focus groups in an attempt to acquire a clear and accurate picture of the components of the design. It would be virtually impossible for one researcher to attend to this type of research method.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Much of the methodological research used surveys to gather appropriate information concerning personal and social factors that effect failure and dropout rates of high-risk students (Barak & Breier, 1990; Clarke, 1972; Harvie & Fair, 1969; Pascal & Kanowitch, 1979). In research conducted by Clarke (1972) he used a questionnaire and the California Psychological Inventory to determine 18 personality measures. This was followed by a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire data. Evaluation of a model program for at-risk students conducted by Wehlage, Rutter and Turnbaugh (1986) developed a pre/post instrument to determine personal and social factors of at-risk students. This instrument was called the Wisconsin Youth Survey and has been used for several at-risk program evaluations; the constructs included locus of control, self-esteem, efficacy, delayed

gratification, negative labeling, sociocentric reasoning, perception of opportunity, educational and occupational aspirations, and social bonding to peers, school, teachers, and conventional roles. The means were reported for each construct.

Conducting interviews was another instrument considered in the literature on qualitative research (Wignall, 1998). This type of inquiry is designed to investigate how students construct their social world and how they derive meaning from their social world (Wignall, 1998). This could be an effective qualitative tool for educational research; however, documenting, compiling, interpreting, and analyzing responses from the interviewees would be very time consuming, in particular, if the researcher were to work with a large sample group. I also see the danger in possible misinterpretation of the responses, which would affect the final analysis of the research project. The subjectivity of this method may not produce the kinds of objective, predictable results sought after in educational research, yet the interview responses could prompt further research into particular areas not previously considered by researchers.

Summary on Literature Review

Although the literature reviewed in my study covered a broad range of age groups, a variety of programs, and encouraging results, I tried not to lose sight of the objects of the General Studies Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College. I was able to abstract some valuable information on how other institutions addressed high-risk students, and how the literature affirmed the need to implement an initiative program. Canadian and American literature also confirmed there was an increased concern regarding student withdrawal by the institutions themselves. With the competitive nature of post-secondary institutions to raise enrolment figures and be accountable to students, businesses and communities, many

institutions need to become active in providing support programs for high-risk students. The review of the research literature thus far affirmed that success for high-risk, first-semester students was an issue, and this led to the assumption that implementation of an academic and social support program could play a major factor in how high-risk students could achieve academic success. It was also crucial to implement some interventions for these students during their first semester; therefore, the Initiative Program was introduced to the conditionally accepted students in their first semester at Lethbridge Community College.

After reviewing the literature on research methodology, I realized the importance of selecting the most appropriate method for my study, if my results were to provide the kinds of information needed to effectively change in retention and success of conditionally accepted students at Lethbridge Community College. Although quantitative research seemed to be the most logical method in comparing grade point averages, final grades, and enrolment numbers, there was also value in incorporating some qualitative information to provide some explanation or insight into the qualitative results.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In my attempt to support my hypothesis that the success and retention, over two academic semesters, of the Initiative Program students will be higher than that of students with similar entry conditions who did not participate in the Initiative Program, I realized the methods and instruments described in the literature review needed to be modified to address, specifically, the Initiative Program and the students at Lethbridge Community College. Therefore, I selected variables and conditions that would provide accurate and useful information in proving or disproving my hypothesis, yet at the same time I considered the necessity of being able to replicate this study and generalize the results to other situations. In other words, the final analysis of this study helped with the evaluation of the Initiative Program and its effect on students, and it can be readily considered for other programs, institutions, or similar situations. The Initiative Program study began in September 2000, and for the purposes of this project, the final analysis was completed in April 2001. The Initiative Program, however, continues to be used at Lethbridge Community College.

Research Design

The type of research design used for the General Studies Initiative Program study was experimental. The administration of the Initiative Program in its first semester was the treatment used in this experiment. With an experimental design, the objective was to determine whether or not the participation in the Initiative Program would result in higher retention and success of the Program's conditionally accepted General Studies students.

For the most part of this experimental study, I relied on quantitative methods. Quantitative data that showed the number of credits and types of courses Initiative Program

students registered in were collected at the onset in September 2000. GPA scores, number of credits earned and courses completed were collected for the same group of students at the end of December 2000. Similar quantitative data were also collected from September 1999 for conditionally accepted General Studies students, who did not participate in the Initiative Program, but who had entered General Studies with similar conditions as the Initiative Program students.

In determining the effectiveness of the Initiative Program, quantitative data did reflect some objective information that was useful in the evaluation of the Program; however, quantitative data did not reflect student feedback or opinions. Therefore, I incorporated some qualitative questions into a 23-item survey to help explain or justify the results from the quantitative data. The qualitative items on the survey asked for students' comments, feedback, and explanations pertaining to their first-semester experiences, both academic and social.

Sampling Procedures

I used two sample groups for this study: the experimental group consisted of students who participated in the Initiative Program, and the control group consisted of students with similar conditions to the experimental groups but did not participate in the Initiative Program. The general population of both groups consisted of first-semester college students who had no previous post-secondary experience, and were selected according to entrance exam scores rather than by gender, age, or socioeconomic status. One sample group of first-semester students was gathered from the fall 1999 semester, and the second sample group was gathered from the fall 2000 semester. The structure and requirements of the General Studies Program remained the same in these years with the exception of the Initiative Program

(which provided more student support and the COL120 course) being added in the fall 2000 semester.

Selection of Sample Groups

When potential students apply to enter into the General Studies Program at Lethbridge Community College, they write the Computerized Placement Test if their high school transcript scores in math, English or reading are borderline, if their high school transcript is out of province, or if the student has not attended formal education for two or more years. This test determines the students' academic proficiency levels in basic arithmetic and elementary algebra, reading comprehension, and sentence skills. The results are recorded in percentile scores rather than percentage scores. The acceptable percentile scores for unconditional acceptance into General Studies are a minimum 60th percentile in reading comprehension and sentence skills, and a minimum 50th percentile for basic arithmetic and elementary algebra. The students' percentile scores are reviewed by the General Studies Program Coordinator. Students who do not achieve the acceptable percentile scores are given letters of a conditional acceptance offer into the General Studies Program; if the students accept this offer of admission, they are required to successfully complete developmental courses in whichever skill area they were deficient in according to the Computerized Placement Test. For example, if a student was below the 60th percentile in sentence skills, he or she was required to successfully complete English 101 in his or her first semester.

Students who were deficient in any two or all three of the tested areas were selected for the sample population of this study. These students were classified as conditionally accepted students in the General Studies Program at Lethbridge Community College. As well as registration in their required developmental courses, the students were allowed to choose

other courses offered in General Studies without restriction such as Psychology 160 or other introductory program courses offered to General Studies students such as Human Relations 160 from the Criminal Justice program.

Control Group. The control group for this study was comprised of first-semester students who were conditionally accepted, with two or more conditions, into the General Studies in September 1999. It was necessary to ensure that these students had not had any prior post-secondary experience. In other words, all participants in the control group began with the same criteria in order to minimize any chance of tarnishing the results of the study. Participants in this sample did not participate in the Initiative Program. It was also important to only consider those conditionally accepted students who were registered as full time students. Therefore, each participant in the control group initially registered in a minimum of 15 credits in September 1999. The reason I only considered full time students was I didn't feel factors such as stress, workload, or integration could be applied or considered equally between a student registered in 15 credits and a student registered in only 9 credits. There were 34 participants in this group.

Experimental Group. The experimental group was comprised of first-semester students who were conditionally accepted, with two or more conditions, into the General Studies Program in September 2000. Similar to the control group, the participants in this group did not have any prior post-secondary experience and registered in a minimum of 15 credits in their first semester. However, this group participated in the Initiative Program for their first semester. There were 40 participants in this sample.

The selection and admission procedures in determining conditionally accepted students in the General Studies Program did not change for this study, nor were they

influenced by this study. However, prior to this study, conditionally accepted students were not identified as a unique group set apart from the General Studies population as a whole. The conditionally accepted students attended their remedial courses along with other General Studies courses required for a General Studies certificate or diploma.

Experimental Treatments and Procedures

The experimental treatment used in this study was the administration of the Initiative Program for conditionally accepted General Studies students. The duration of the treatment for this study was one academic semester; however, the Initiative Program continues to be modified and is still focused on assisting first-semester conditionally accepted students to succeed and continue their education.

Attaining student participation and cooperation in this study were not a problem. Conditionally accepted students realized they needed to fulfill the requirements set out in their acceptance letter if they wanted to continue their education at Lethbridge Community College. Therefore, the Initiative Program, with the College Success 120 course, and the developmental courses were part of the students' registration requirements. In other words, the students were not aware that College Success 120 was the treatment for an experiment. In addition, the students in the experimental group were not aware that they were participating in a research study until the end of the semester when they completed a survey for this study. Withholding this information from the students, until the survey, was deliberate because I did not want the students' behaviour to be influenced by their knowledge of their participation in this study. It was important that the experimental group was as natural as possible when comparing their data results to the control group data results.

Students identified as Initiative Program students registered in their required developmental courses, other selected courses, and College Success 120. Table 1.0 shows an example of an Initiative student's course load who was admitted with two required academic courses and General Studies Initiative course (COL120).

Table 1.0 *Sample General Studies Initiative Course Load*

Required Courses:		Credits
* General Studies Initiative	COL 120	1
* Analytical Reading	RDG 101	3
* Basic Writing Composition	ENG101	3
Strongly Recommended:		
* College Success	COL 101	3
* Psychology (or other academic course)	PSY 160	3
Other Approved Course (s)		
* Introduction to Computers (or other approved course)	CPU 151	3
Total Credit Hours		16

College Success 120 was the course designed specifically for the Initiative Program, and was used as the treatment in this study. Its objective was to assist Initiative Program students in their first semester.

In September 2000, the College Success 120 course had not officially been approved through Academic Council, so rather than postponing the Initiative Program to the following semester, the Initiative students were registered in Independent Study 151. The Independent Study 151, however, did not have a set day, time, or class in the timetable. As a result, the September 2000 schedules of the Initiative students had to be compared and juggled in order to find the best times that all Initiative students could attend the Independent Study 151. As soon as I found common times for all Initiative students, classrooms were booked, and by the second week in September 2000, there were three sections of Independent Study 151.

Because the Independent Study 151 times were not written in the initial timetable, there was one student whose schedule did not work with the addition of the Independent Study 151 course. Therefore, that student had to meet with the Independent Study 151 instructor, one-on-one, throughout the semester in order for the student to fulfill the requirements. Unfortunately, this student did not benefit from peer interaction, class discussions, and guest speakers in the Independent Study 151 class.

In January 2001, Academic Council approved the College Success 120 course and curriculum, and from this point on, I will refer to Independent Study 151 as College Success 120. Also, beginning in January 2001, College Success 120 was a scheduled course and officially appears as such in subsequent timetables and the college calendar.

College Success 120 is a one-credit course where the students meet with an instructor for one 50-minute class each week. In September 2000, there were three sections of College Success 120, and there were approximately 17 students in each section. There was a discrepancy between the total number of students in College Success 120 and the total number of students used in the experimental group. The reason was some of the students in College Success 120 were part time students, others had had prior post-secondary experience, and there were 11 Japanese students (who were completing a two-year diploma at Lethbridge Community College) from the Nippon Institute of Technology who took the course strictly for English conversation and social interaction with Canadian students; therefore, these three groups of students were not included in the experimental group data.

The curriculum and instruction for College Success 120 focused on student integration, study skills, instructor-student relations, learning styles, stress management, self-esteem, self-confidence, student expectations, and grade calculations. There was a variety of

teaching methods and activities used to deliver these topics: seminars, guest speakers, class discussions, lectures, and group work. Each topic was designed to meet a specific issue as outlined in the literature review. For example, integration of first-semester students was an important factor in much of the literature; therefore, the first lecture was on getting to know the other students and socializing. Subsequent topics were delivered according to the groups' needs as determined by the instructor. During the semester, one group of students was having difficulty with another course and found it difficult to relate to that instructor; therefore, one lecture was devoted to looking at the problem, brainstorming solutions, deciding on a course of action, and talking about student-instructor relations in general. Since this course is devoted to students' academic, social and emotional well-being, the sequence and scope of the course is basically determined according to the students' needs.

Attendance and reflection were stressed in College Success 120. An important behaviour that can be attributed to success is regular attendance. Attendance was taken every lecture, and the students' attendance contributed to 50% of the final grade in this course. Personal reflection was also a target behaviour that the course focused on. After each class, the students were required to write a journal entry pertaining to the topic of discussion. The journal entry topics were fairly structured, and the instructor provided a variety of questions to prompt student writing and reflection. The journal portion of the course constituted 40% of the final grade. The last 10% of the final grade was for assignments. The assignments were not academically challenging in as much as they were reinforcements of expected behaviour, study skills, and interpersonal skills. Students had to achieve a final grade of 90% or higher in order to receive credit for College Success 120.

Twice during the semester, beginning of October and mid-November, Initiative Program students were required to obtain a progress report from the instructors in their developmental courses (ENG101, RDG101, MTH102). One of the components of the progress report was for the course instructor to indicate the student's attendance; another component was to indicate whether or not the student was passing or failing. The reason for the progress reports from the students' developmental courses was to determine if some form of intervention was required for any student who was failing or not attending classes.

If the progress report indicated a possible fail, the College Success 120 instructor contacted the instructor of the developmental course to determine possible reasons for the low grade and how the student could bring up his or her grade in that course. At the same time, the failing student was required to set up a one-on-one meeting with his or her developmental course instructor to discuss what needed to be done to bring up his or her grade.

If the students wanted to continue in the General Studies program the following semester, it was mandatory that they successfully complete their developmental courses and College Success 120. Students obtaining progress reports from their developmental course instructors was one example of a student assignment for College Success 120.

One of the unforeseen problems with having the students obtain their own progress reports was that the students who knew they were not doing very well in their developmental courses, or who felt uncomfortable approaching their instructors, did not obtain a progress report for the developmental course. In this case, the College Success 120 instructor had to take the initiative to obtain the progress report information from the student's instructors, and

the student did not receive credit for that assignment. Subsequently, the College Success 120 instructor spoke with the student to determine why the student did not do the assignment.

Measures

The measures I used for this study resulted in a comparison of academic performance, withdrawal data from courses and or program, course credit load, and retention between the experimental group and the control group. All the measures used in this study are well known and well used at Lethbridge Community College.

Routine computerized placement tests were used to identify conditional acceptances into the General Studies Program. This test measure was administered, by the Assessment Centre staff, to students applying to the Program. These test results assisted in determining the sample in this study. Furthermore, the computerized placement test results may also be used as a factor in determining whether chances of academic success are unlikely if those test results were too low. In other words, students are conditionally accepted regardless of how far below the acceptable 60th percentile their scores were. For example, the chances of success after the first semester may be highly unlikely if a student was conditionally accepted with computerized placement test results below the 30th percentile. In the future, this large discrepancy between acceptable and actual scores may need to be considered when looking at student admissions.

Student transcripts from the college registrar's office was used for all data involving number of credits students were registered in, number of successfully completed credits, course final grades, final GPA scores, and the types of courses (social sciences, humanities, skills or non-General Studies courses) students registered in.

The types of courses will have an impact on the results of this study because some students registered in social science courses and others registered in only skills courses. In other words, a student who has registered in mostly science courses may not acquire as high a grade point average as a student who registered in skills courses such as physical education or keyboarding. Similarly, a student registered in 15 credits may experience higher academic success over a student who registered in 19 credits, for example. Furthermore, students who register in non-General Studies courses could indicate that those students have a program/career goal in mind. According to the research, having an established career goal may positively influence the student's success. Looking at the types and quantities of courses students registered in will influence the final analysis of success and retention between the control group and the experimental group.

After the student final grades were submitted, I gathered the transcripts for the sample population. If I am to determine the success and retention of the experimental group against the control group, then this transcript data is crucial in determining my hypothesis.

A survey was administered to all students registered in College Success 120 on the last day of class. All students were given background information on the purpose of the survey and how the survey results were going to be used. Confidentiality was stressed and students were given the option of not having their survey responses included in this study; however, all survey responses were used for Lethbridge Community College and its evaluation of the Initiative Program. The objective of the survey was to gain insight and knowledge on how the students felt about their courses, the Initiative Program, and their post-secondary experiences in general. Other information in the survey included personal

information such as age group, sex, permanent residence, financial or family concerns, and number of years since last attended formal education.

The return rate of the survey responses was nearly 100% because it was administered during class time, and it was used as one of the assignments for College Success 120. There were, however, three students who did not wish to have their survey responses used for this study.

The College Success instructor left the classroom while the students completed the survey, and one designated student distributed and collected the surveys, then delivered them to the department secretary for tabulation and typing of the student comments. The College Success 120 instructor did not see the individual survey responses, and all surveys were destroyed after the data was collated.

Initially, there was also a modified survey that was to be given to any students who withdrew before the end of the semester. This survey focused on questions pertaining to reasons why the student withdrew and possible future plans. Fulfilling this survey component of the study was difficult to initiate because when a student withdraws from the program, he or she can go directly to the registrar's office and fill out a withdrawal form. In other words, since the Initiative Program students were not flagged as such in the registration process, when a student went to withdraw, there was nothing indicating that the student was an Initiative Program student. Therefore, the employees in registration did not question the withdrawal and whether or not the student was in the Initiative Program. If the registration employees knew for certain that the student who was withdrawing was an Initiative Program student, then a survey could have easily been given to the student at the time of withdrawal.

Yet, once the student withdrew and left the campus, it was difficult to track him or her and the likelihood of receiving a completed survey back from the student was not good. I think it is equally important to receive feedback from students who withdraw from the program, so in future, a more effective way of gathering information from withdrawn students needs to be addressed.

The measures used in this study were not complex, unique or intrusive. However, they provided quantitative and qualitative (survey) data necessary to determine whether or not the success and retention of Initiative Program students was higher than non-Initiative Program students after one academic year.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Generating data and results for this study based on the methods used required three basic computer programs. First, the M1 computerized administrative system was used to generate all student records and transcripts. The M1 system is used for all Lethbridge Community College student and course data. In other words, authorized administrators and instructors are able to gain access to a student's entire academic history at Lethbridge Community College. There is a detailed account of courses students withdrew from, their grade points in each course, and their grade point averages at the end of each semester. Furthermore, course rosters, including number of sections, dates, days of the week, times, and instructor, can be accessed for past semester courses and present semester courses through the M1 system. Aside from the students' CPT scores, the M1 system provided all the necessary academic data needed to initiate this study.

Excel 2000 was used to enter and organize student data into a spreadsheet format. From there, this program was able to calculate the distributions of each variable, the central tendencies of each distribution, and the variability that existed in each distribution. Excel 2000 gave me a general overview of the results of the data, and I was able to make some general observations based on these results. However, Excel 2000 was not able to generate some of the graphic illustrations necessary to provide a visual interpretation of some of the data.

Finally, the data entered into Excel 2000 was copied into SPSS to ensure the data was 'clean', and was used to determine correlations or relationships between variables. For example, I wanted to know if there was a correlation between entrance CPT scores and final

GPA scores; SPSS was more efficient in producing these types of results and transferring those results into visual interpretations. Furthermore, SPSS had the capabilities of providing graphic illustrations not offered in the Excel 2000 software, such as a bell curve depicting standard deviations from the mean.

Results of this study were generated specifically to prove or disprove my hypothesis that the success and retention, over two academic semesters, of Initiative Program students will be higher than that of students with similar entry conditions who did not participate in the Initiative Program. However, after considering the nature of the data I collected, (every course, course type, credit, grade point and GPA of each student) the potential for further analysis is feasible in the future. In other words, the main focus of the data results and analysis, for this study, were to determine the overall effectiveness of the Initiative Program rather than to determine individual student success based on types of courses registered in, for example.

Sample Population

The total number of participants in this study was 74 first-semester, conditionally accepted students. The 74 participants were separated into two groups; the control group and the experimental group (see Table 4.0).

Table 4.0

Sex and Age of Control Group and Experimental Group

	<u>Control</u>	<u>Experimental</u>
Male	21	21
Female	13	19
Age: <18 – 19	18	25
20 – 23	13	10
>23	3	5

The majority of students in both the control group and the experimental group were between the ages of 18 and 19 years old. In other words, approximately 54% of the General Studies Initiative students had more than likely just completed high school when they entered Lethbridge Community College.

Credit Load Information

Students in both groups were full-time students, which meant they registered in a minimum 15 credits. The average credit load per student in the control group was 16.7 in the first semester and 17 in semester two. The average credit load per student in the experimental group was 16.88 in their first semester and 15.97 in semester two. In semester one, the experimental group's credit load included the one-credit COL120 course, which was the treatment for this study. In semester two, the experimental group averaged approximately one less credit than the control group in the number of registered credits per student

(experimental = 15.97, control = 16.97). Table 4.1 shows the successful credit completion for two semesters.

Table 4.1

Percent of Completed Credits for Semester 1 and Semester 2 by Control Group and Experimental Group

	<u>Semester 1</u>	<u>Semester 2</u>
Control	75	70
Experimental	63	70

Note. At the end of semester one the sample size for the experimental group decreased by one participant, reducing its total from 40 to 39. This student's data on completed credits was not reflected in the final calculations because he or she withdrew from the program. However, any student who did not officially withdraw from courses or the program and who received zero scores was considered in the final calculations. In semester two, the number of participants reduced to 31 for both groups.

Since some of the full-time students from semester one returned as part-time students in semester two there was a wider range of registered credits per student in semester two for both groups. For example, in semester two, the range of registered credits per student for the control group was 6 to 25 credits and 2 to 23 credits for the experimental group. The highest credit totals in the range increased in the second semester for both groups: from 21 to 25 credits for the control group and from 20 to 23 for the experimental group.

In semester two, those students in the experimental group who successfully completed their conditional requirements, including COL120, were able to register in any courses they wished; therefore, the total number of credits and the range numbers do not have

any conditional courses included and reflect strictly student choices for courses. The students also had the choice whether or not to return as part-time or full-time students.

The types of courses students registered in may have had an impact on credit completion rates. The types of courses students registered in were not originally a primary consideration for this study. However, in my future attempt to look at reasons students may or may not have been successful, the types of courses students registered in may influence success and retention results. For example, if a conditionally accepted student attempted to complete a majority of science and math courses in semester one, he or she may encounter difficulties due to lack of skill development, which could lead to failure in semester one. I have included the types of courses, categorized into four groups, students registered in for semester one and two in General Studies (see Appendix C).

Grade Point Averages to Measure Success

Within both sample groups, grade point averages were collected to determine the level of success for each group. In my hypothesis that General Studies Initiative students would be more successful than General Studies non-Initiative students over two academic semesters, the measure of success for the students was based on their GPA scores. In other words, student success meant the student achieved a GPA of 1.50 or higher, regardless of the actual GPA score above 1.50. Any student who received a GPA score less than 1.50 was categorized as unsuccessful.

Comparison of Success Between Control Group & Experimental Group

Calculating the mean, median and standard deviation of GPA scores determined the overall performance of both groups over two semesters. Table 4.2 illustrates the comparison of the two groups in semester one and semester two.

Table 4.2

Grade Point Average Central Tendency Measures and Variability for Semester One and Two of Control Group and Experimental Group

	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>-1 D</i> (% of <i>N</i>)	<i>+1 D</i> (% of <i>N</i>)
<u>Semester 1</u>						
Control (<i>N</i> = 34)	2.15	2.1	2.07	1.01	24	38
Experimental (<i>N</i> = 39)	1.59	0	1.65	1.59	41	49
<u>Semester 2</u>						
Control (<i>N</i> = 31)	2.11	0	1.82	1.16	23	35
Experimental (<i>N</i> = 31)	2.00	0	1.67	0.97	16	52

For three of the four central tendency data sets in Table 4.2, the results indicate positively skewed distributions. Only the control group in semester one indicates a near symmetrical distribution with the mean, mode and median scores. The amount of variability (1.59 *SD*) shown in Table 4.2 indicated a wide dispersion of scores from the mean for the experimental group in semester one, which explains the 90% population concentration within -1 and $+1$ deviations. The control group in semester one and two along with the experimental group in semester 2 show a more normal distribution with approximately 68% of the population GPA scores falling within -1 and $+1$ deviations from the mean scores. However,

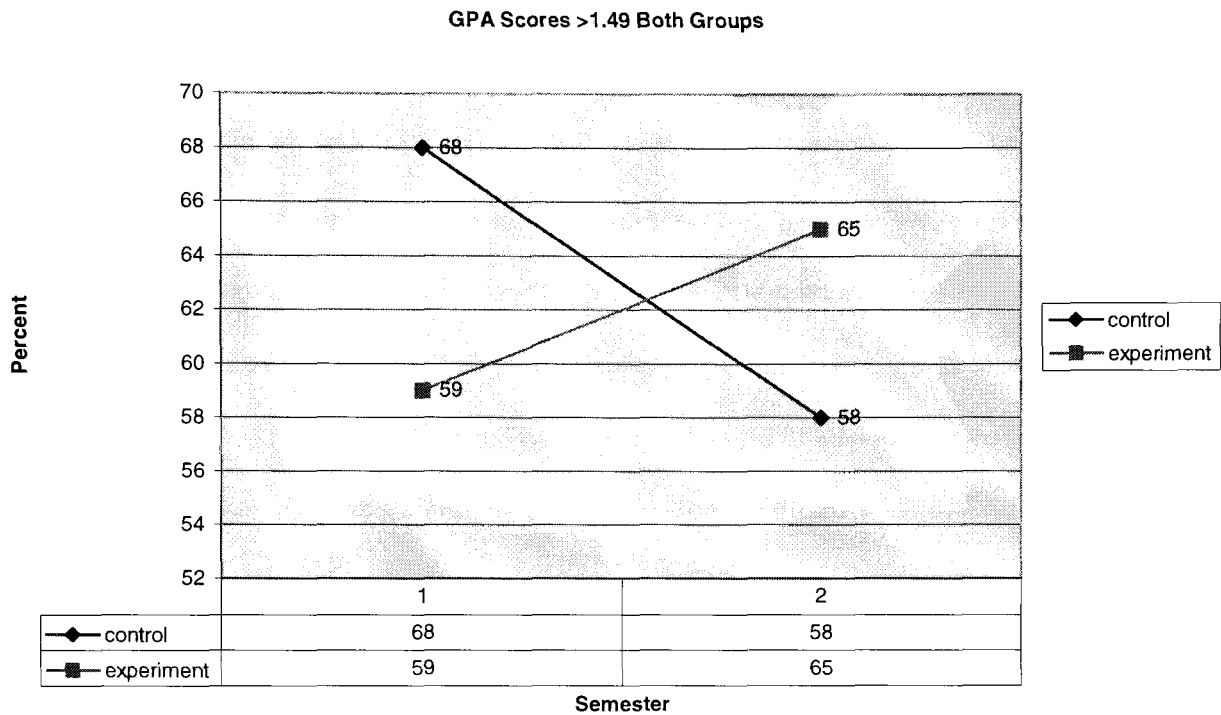
within the 1 deviation, plus or minus, a higher percentage scored in the +1 deviation range in all three cases.

The range of GPA scores for the control group in semester one was 0 – 3.75 and in semester two was 0 – 3.63. In comparison, the experimental group had a GPA score range of 0 – 3.20 in semester one and 0 – 3.33 in semester two.

More important to this study, calculations on the numbers of students from both groups who received GPA scores of 1.50 or higher were compared over two semesters. Figure 4.0 illustrates the percentage of students who achieved success ($GPA > 1.49$) in semester one and two. The control group had a 10% decrease in the number of student who succeeded in semester two as opposed to semester one. On the other hand, the trend was opposite for the experimental group. There was a 6% increase in the GPA success rate in semester two for the experimental group.

Students in both groups who received a GPA score < 1.50 in semester one were placed on academic probation and had their subsequent semester to bring their GPA scores up to 1.50 or higher to ensure their continued placement in the program.

Figure 4.0

Comparison of Percentage of Successful Students Over Two Academic Semesters

Note: Semester 1, control N = 34, experimental N = 39. Semester 2, control and experimental N = 31.

Student Retention Over Two Semesters

The data collected to determine the percent of student retention over two semesters was comprised of students who stayed at Lethbridge Community College as well as the percentage of students who stayed in the General Studies Programs as opposed to other programs offered at the College.

From the control group, of the 34 students who completed semester one, there were 31 students who remained at Lethbridge Community College in their second semester. From the experimental group, of the 39 students who completed semester one, there were 31

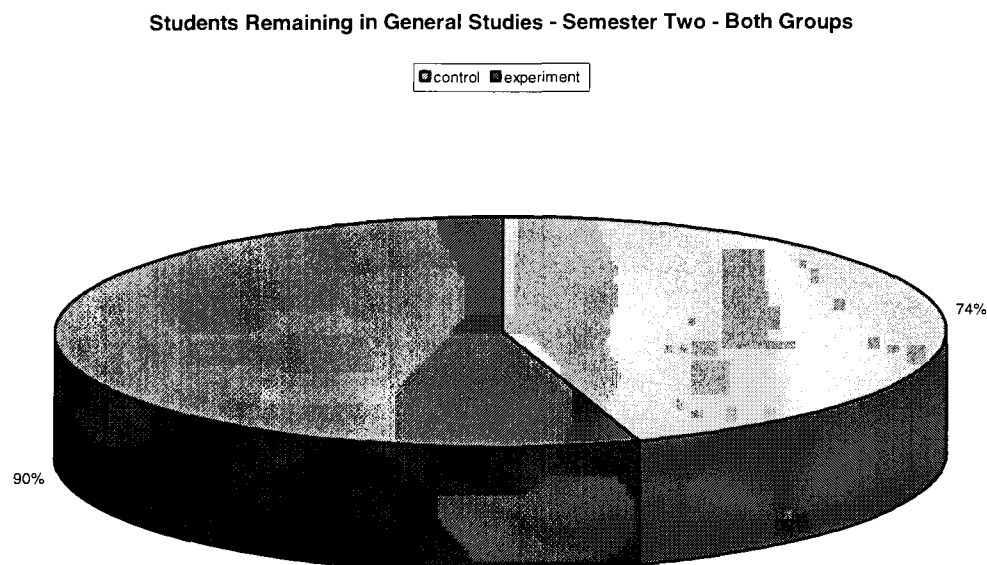
students who remained at Lethbridge Community College for a second semester. In other words, retention was 80% for the experimental group and 91% for the control group.

The three students from the control and the eight students from the experiment group did not return to Lethbridge Community College in their second semester.

Of the continuing students, 28 of 31 in the experiment group stayed in the General Studies Program. On the other hand, 23 of 31 in the control group stayed in the General Studies Program. Figure 4.1 illustrates the percent of students remaining in General Studies. The three participants from the experimental group and the eight participants from the control group who did not stay in General Studies entered into other Lethbridge Community College Programs; some of the programs included Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Child and Youth Care, and Upgrading.

Figure 4.1

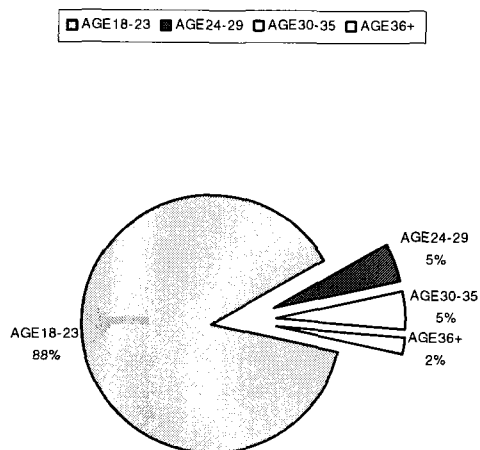
Percentage of Population Remaining in General Studies Program in Semester 2 by Group



Survey Results

There were 43 General Studies Initiative students who completed the survey at the end of the first semester. (See Figure 4.2 for division of the respondents by age.) There is a discrepancy in the total number of students (43) who completed the survey as opposed to the number of students (39) used for this study. This discrepancy is because the four Initiative students whose data was not included in this study were part-time students, and only full-time students were used for this study. In addition, the survey was administered to all General Studies Initiative students because it was an assignment for COL120; therefore, the survey was completed by all students in attendance during class time regardless of full-time/part-time status. There were three students who did not want their survey responses included in this study; however, their responses were considered for a program/course evaluation for Lethbridge Community College.

Figure 4.2

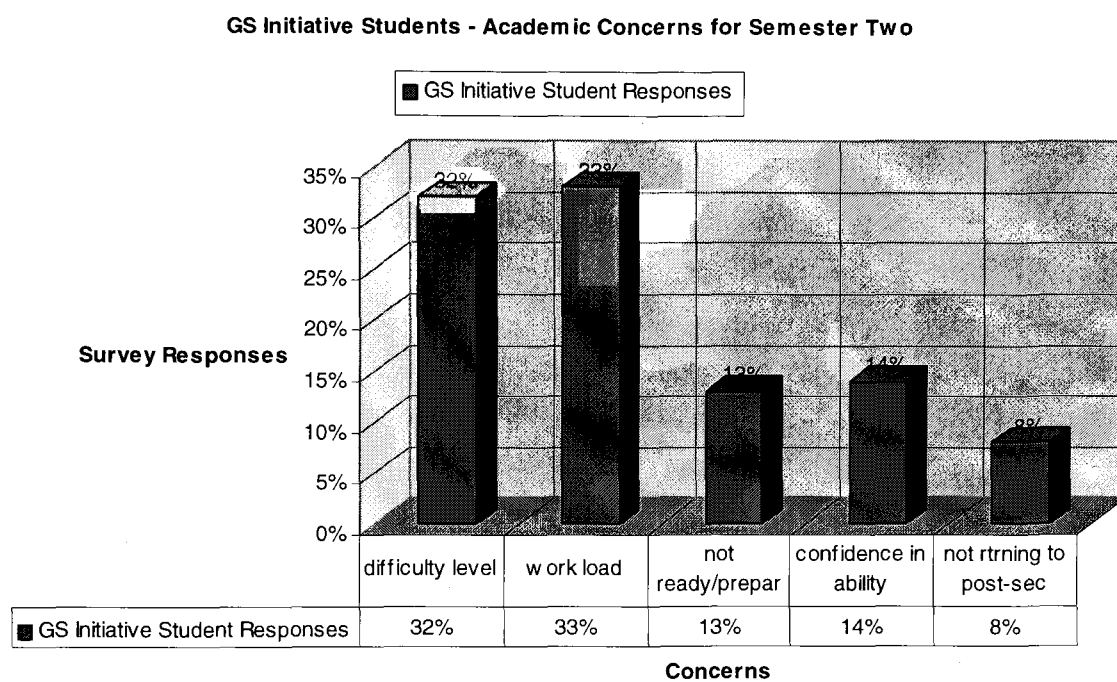
*Initiative Program Survey Respondents According to Age Groups***General Studies Initiative Program Students - Semester One (Experiment Group Included)**

Note: The total percent of male Initiative students was 54% and 46% was female .A summary of survey responses and anonymous student comments can be found in Appendix D.

When the students were asked whether or not the advantages of the Initiative Program (survey question #14, see Appendix A) outweighed the disadvantages, 69% indicated yes, while 31% indicated no. In other words, a majority of Initiative students felt the Initiative experience helped them through their first semester.

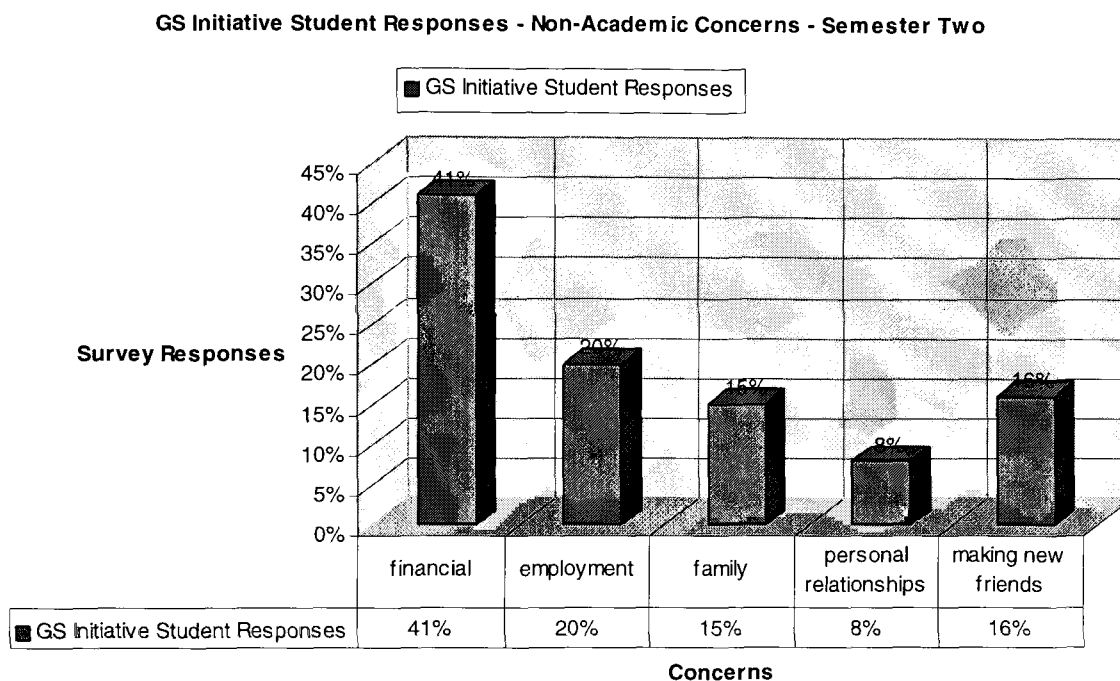
When I considered the survey responses regarding retention, the main academic concern students had was a demanding work load followed by level of difficulty (survey question #15, see Appendix A). The main non-academic concern students had regarding their entry into semester two was financial (survey question #16, see Appendix A). (See Figure 4.3 and 4.4)

Figure 4.3

Survey Results on GS Initiative Students' Academic Concerns – Semester Two

Note: In Figure 4.3 (survey question 15) the responses were not rank ordered; instead, respondents identified all options that applied to them.

Figure 4.4

Survey Results on GS Initiative Students' Non-Academic Concerns – Semester Two

Note: In Figure 4.4 (survey question 16), the responses were not rank ordered; instead, respondents identified all options that applied to them.

In determining some factors that may have influenced the success and retention of General Studies Initiative students (experiment group) and their General Studies counterparts (control group), the data presented in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 will be considered and discussed in the discussion chapter and the recommendations chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Although this study is not exhaustive in nature, there were some significant findings that helped me generate possible answers to my research questions. Although the research results indicated that the control group achieved higher GPA scores than the experimental group in both semester one and two, the results of the number of successful students (GPA score >1.49) in semester two were higher for the experimental group than the control group. These results do provide modest support for my hypothesis suggesting that the Initiative Program may have played a role in improving student success in the Initiative Program students' second semester. The results of the retention data do not clearly indicate that the Initiative Program had a positive influence on the number of Initiative students who returned for a second semester. Although the retention percent was high for the experimental group (80%), the control group had a higher retention rate (91%) in its second semester. In other words, the data for success and retention failed to clearly support my hypothesis that students who participated in the Initiative Program would have a higher success and retention rate than students who did not. However, there was evidence to indicate that within the experimental group itself success and retention was apparent when that particular group's two consecutive semesters were compared.

Were Initiative Program Students More Successful Than non-Initiative Students?

For this study, success was determined as achieving a grade point average of 1.50 or higher. In the first semester for both groups, results indicated that the control group (non-Initiative students) had a higher average GPA score than the experimental group (Initiative students) as presented in Table 4.5. Yet at the end of the second semester, the average GPA

score for the control group decreased while the average GPA score for the experimental group increased. In other words, over two semesters, the experimental group increased its average success rate (fall 2000, average GPA = 1.65; spring 2001, average GPA = 1.67). An increase of average GPA scores over two semesters was also experienced by the Prediction Academic Success contract students from the Southwest Texas State University study (Hodges & Dochen, 1999). In semester one, 1998, the average GPA score for the Prediction Academic Success contract students was 2.3, and after their second semester in 1999, their average GPA score increased to 2.5. The Southwest Texas State University Prediction Academic Success students had similar conditions placed on them in their first semester as the Lethbridge Community College Initiative Program students had in their first semester. Also, the students in both studies had to successfully complete their conditions in their first semester in order to continue into semester two.

The increase of average GPA scores over two semesters for the Initiative Program students was not large enough to suggest that participation in the Initiative Program in the first semester could be attributed to any increase in the students' GPA scores in their second semester.

Did Entrance Exams Have An Influence On Student Success?

One possible explanation as to why the control group maintained higher GPA mean and median scores than the experimental group might be a result of entrance testing percentile scores. When students apply to enter a program at Lethbridge Community College, they write a computerized placement test to determine conditional or unconditional acceptance into a program. Applicants must achieve a 60th percentile score in reading comprehension, grammar and sentence structure and a 50th percentile in algebra and

arithmetic to be accepted without conditions. The control group scored higher, on average, in all areas (reading, writing, algebra) of the computerized placement tests than the experimental group (see Figure 5.0). This difference in placement scores could indicate that the control group and the experimental group cannot be compared directly for this study because the groups do not have similar entrance scores going into the study.

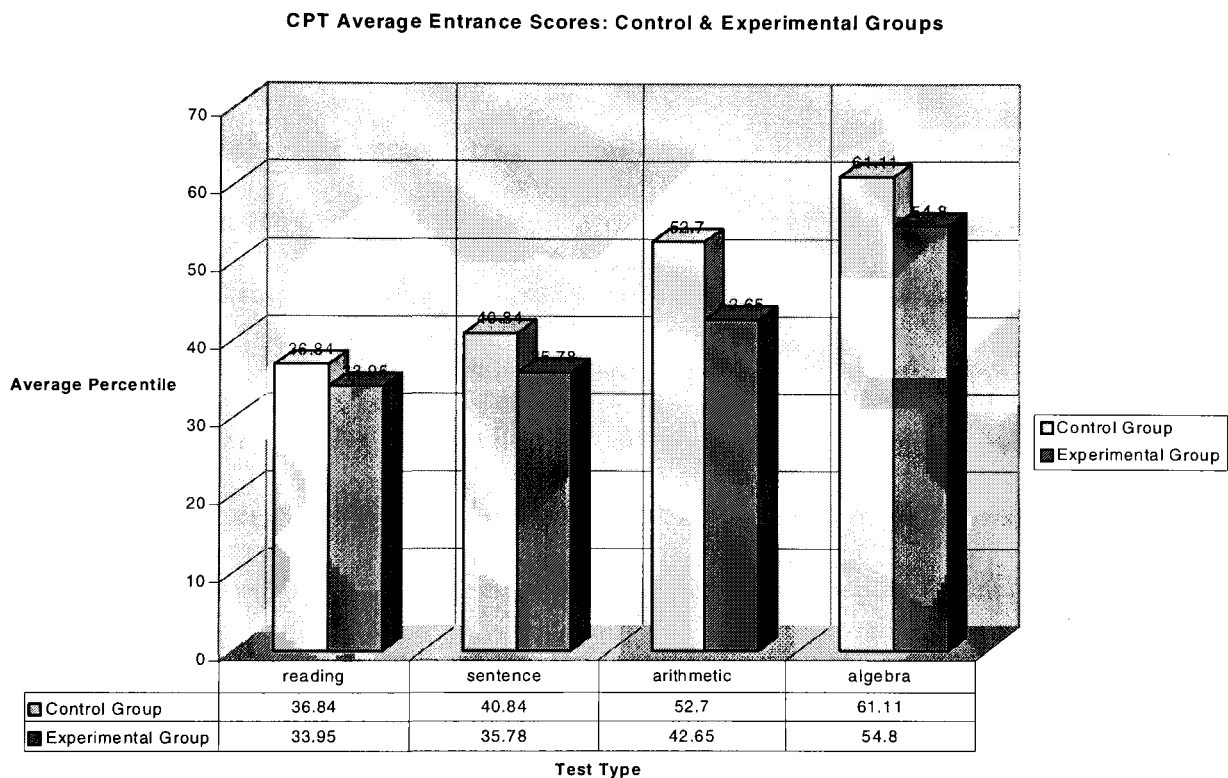
However, when this study began the computerized placement tests were used to determine what developmental courses students needed to complete in order to stay and continue in the General Studies Program. The actual percentile scores that individual students acquired on the computerized placement tests were not the main focus; instead, the acceptable percentile scores (60th and 50th percentile) were the variables in determining who participated in this study. When considering only the 60th percentile cutoff for reading, and sentence structure, and only the 50th percentile cutoff for algebra and arithmetic, both groups do in fact enter this study with similar conditions or criteria. In other words, any student who scored less than the 60th percentile in reading, sentence structure, and or the 50th percentile in algebra and arithmetic was considered for this study regardless of how far below the acceptable percentile his or her actual scores were.

Since the success (GPA scores) of Initiative Program students remained slightly below that of non-Initiative students, I tried to look for a possible explanation for this in the students' entrance exam scores. In other words, I wanted to know if the students' entrance levels could have affected their level of success at the end of the semester. According to Figure 5.0, the control group maintained slightly higher test score averages in the four (reading, sentence structure, arithmetic, algebra) test areas than the experimental group. For example, the average computerized placement test percentile scores for reading were 36.84

for the control group and 33.95 for the experimental group. This might suggest a possible explanation for the slightly higher GPA average scores achieved by the control group over the experimental group at the end of their semesters. Figure 5.0 illustrates the CPT average scores for both groups.

Figure 5.0

Comparison of Computerized Placement Test Score Averages in Four Test Areas Between Control Group and Experimental Group



What was more alarming was that the lowest percentile score in reading comprehension was the 10th percentile followed by a 16th percentile for the control group and the 8th percentile followed by a 9th percentile for the experimental group. In addition, the lowest sentence structure scores were not much higher: 12th percentile (two students from

control group; one student from experimental group) followed by a 13th percentile (one student each from control and experimental group) for the control group and the experimental group. My concern was that a 16-week semester would not be long enough for those particular students to acquire the reading and writing skills necessary to succeed and continue in a post-secondary environment.

When I studied the final grade point scores of those nine previously mentioned students who scored extremely low on the reading and sentence structure computerized placement tests, I discovered that their low scores did not have a negative impact on whichever conditional courses they were required to take (English 101 or Reading 101). For example, the students in the control group who scored at the 10th and 16th percentile in the reading comprehension portion of the computerized placement test received final grade point scores of 9 and 7.5 respectively in Reading 101. The two students in the experimental group who scored at the 8th and 9th percentile in reading comprehension received final grade point scores of 4.5 and 9 respectively in Reading 101. In other words, their extremely low placement test scores did not suggest possible failure in Reading 101. Furthermore, the low placement test scores should not be used as the sole predictor of student failure or success.

On the other hand, the final grade point scores in English 101 were not as consistently positive as the Reading 101 final grade point scores. For example, of the two students in the control group who scored at the 12th percentile in the computerized placement test, one student received a final grade point of 4.5, and the other student received a final grade point of 0 in English 101. In the experimental group, the students who scored at the 12th and 13th percentile on the sentence structure portion of the computerized placement test had final grade point scores in English 101 of 12 and 0 respectively.

When looking at individual student's final grade scores and whether or not the computerized placement test could predict some level of academic success, it is difficult to determine if placement test scores might affect the potential for success in the conditional courses. In the above cases, where there were low entrance scores and successful final grade points in the related conditional courses may be unique and not representative of the general population.

Finally, although the control group maintained higher computerized placement test scores than the experimental group, the experimental group had a higher success percent in English 101 and Math 102 than the control group did. For Reading 101 the experimental group was only 4% lower in successful completion than the control group. (See Table 5.0)

Table 5.0

Registration and Successful Completion of Conditional Courses for Control Group & Experimental Group

	<u>Reading 101</u>		<u>English 101</u>		<u>Math 102</u>	
	<i>n</i>	GPA>2.9	<i>n</i>	GPA>2.9	<i>n</i>	GPA>2.9
Control	31	77 %	33	76 %	3	30%
<i>N</i> = 34						
Experiment	40	73 %	31	78 %	5	46 %
<i>N</i> = 40						

Note: GPA refers to grade point average.

The total number of participants in the experimental group decreased by one participant.

Therefore, registration in conditional courses for the experimental group started at 40

participants; however, 1 student withdrew from the program. That student's data was not included in the final success analysis. Other students who did not officially withdraw from the course or program and who received a grade point average of 0 were included in the final success data analysis.

From the research conducted so far, Lethbridge Community College should not consider computerized placement test scores as a sole indicator of student success when looking at admissions requirements because some students who scored well below the acceptable percentile score on the computerized placement test did succeed in the related conditional courses. Also, student admission into the General Studies Program should not necessarily be declined simply based on low computerized placement test scores regardless of the percentile score.

I feel it is necessary to continue this study to see whether or not a pattern or correlation may emerge over time between entrance test scores and student success. Furthermore, this particular study sample may not have been an accurate reflection of the typical semester enrolment, which would necessitate further research and data collection for future Initiative Program students. A generalization regarding the levels of computerized placement test entrance scores and student success cannot be assumed at this time.

In attempting to explain the success rates for both groups, I realized that the types of courses students registered in did not make a difference to GPA scores. For example, of the courses the control group registered in for semester one, 34% of the credits were for academic courses while the experimental group showed 23% registered academic credits. In semester two, the control group maintained a slightly higher percent (36%) registration in

academic credits than the experimental group (31%). Therefore, in looking strictly at the raw data, a higher registration in academic courses did not indicate a lower average GPA score.

Although the control group maintained more academic credits in both semesters, when I looked at the number of successful students in each group I realized that the percentage of successful student in the experimental group increased in the second semester. The percentage of successful students in the control group dropped in their second semester. Since the experimental group participated in the Initiative Program in the first semester, it is possible that this treatment may have led to the increase in student success in the second semester. According to Yamasaki (1998), there has been a high level of correlation between student success and program characteristics such as required placement testing, academic support, and mandatory successful completion of conditional course. In other words, if these conditions were not placed on Initiative program students in their first semester, their success and retention rates may have been lower than indicated.

It is also possible that since the experimental group registered in more skill development courses, such as computer skills, communication, analytical reading, college success, etc., in the first semester this gave those students some valuable skills to help them succeed in their second semester. The percent of skill development credits that the experimental group registered in for semester one was 45%, while the control group registered in 35%.

I also believe this sequence of credit registration, with a focus on skills development in the first semester followed by more academic courses in the second semester, could have resulted in the positive impact on the success of the experimental group. This might also

explain the increase in the number of successful experimental group students in semester two.

The control group may not have acquired some of the necessary skills development in the first semester to initiate an increase in the percentage of successful students in semester two.

Based on the average grade point average scores of both groups, the experimental group was not more successful than the control group in semester one or semester two. However, after the first semester there was a higher percentage of successful students (GPA >1.49) in the experimental group than the control group (see Figure 4.0). In this respect, the Initiative Program students were more successful than the non-Initiative Program students.

The explanation why the control group scored higher than the experimental group in grade point average scores is difficult at this time because of the limited data in this study and that these are the first two groups who have participated in a study of this kind at Lethbridge Community College. Primarily, the results of the percentage of successful students in each group did support my hypothesis that students who participated in the Initiative Program experienced an average increase in success over two semesters, whereas students with similar conditions who did not participate in the Initiative Program witnessed an average decrease in success over two semesters. In other words, when comparing the data between these two groups of students, the increase in the experimental group's success might be credited to the treatment (COL120 course) that group received.

Was Retention Higher For Initiative Program Students Than non-Initiative Program Students?

Higher student retention of Initiative Program students than non-Initiative students was also considered in my hypothesis. When I analyzed the data on retention, I noticed that both groups had a high retention rate (control – 91%; experiment – 80%) in the second semester. However, there were more students from the control group (non-Initiative program) who returned to Lethbridge Community College than from the experimental group (Initiative Program). There are a few explanations I see that may explain the retention results in both groups.

First, since all participants in this study entered their first semester with two or more conditions to fulfill, I think the types of courses they wanted to register in, whether for interest or future program requirements, were not an option in their first semester. Therefore, the second semester allowed the students an independent choice as to which courses they wanted to take. Often students will start their post-secondary education in the General Studies program to use the courses as a springboard to other Lethbridge Community College programs. For example, if a conditionally accepted student is interested in entering the Nursing program, that student has to first meet the conditions for the General Studies Program before applying to the Nursing program. Furthermore, enrolling in General Studies for a second semester would allow that student to register in some introductory Nursing courses while being registered as a General Studies student. Or if the student took a course that was a requirement for another program and didn't achieve a final grade that was satisfactory, then the student may have decided to repeat the course to achieve a higher more suitable final grade. Becoming familiar with some of the courses within another program will

also help the student determine whether or not that is his or her career choice before actually entering the program. Therefore, one reason why the retention in the second semester was high may be because students wanted or needed to enroll in the courses they initially intended to in semester one.

Secondly, some students who returned for a second semester entered other Lethbridge Community College programs. In Table 5.1, 26% of returning students in the control group went to other LCC programs for semester two, while only 10% from the returning population in the experimental group entered other LCC programs. These results could indicate that the 26% of students from the control group had specific career goals established while they were in their first semester. Conversely, the majority of the experimental group may have been undecided about their career direction, which may account for the small percentage of that group entering other programs.

Table 5.1

Semester Two – Percent of Returning Students According to LCC Program

	General Studies	Other
Control $N = 31$	74	26
Experimental $N = 31$	90	10

Finally, since there was such an increase in the GPA scores of experimental group participants in their second semester coupled with the 90% returning to General Studies, I may be able to conclude that returning to a familiar program (General Studies) with a wider choice of types of courses may have prompted the increase in success as well as the high

retention of that group. For example, if a student finished his or her first semester with a borderline grade point average, he or she may have wanted to return to General Studies to try and boost his or her grade point average score. This could indicate that the student may have wanted to register in courses that were less demanding in his or her second semester in hopes of increasing his or her grade point average. I partially base this notion, of registering in courses that are less demanding, on the survey results shown in Figure 4.3. Of the academic concerns, 32% of the responses indicated a concern with difficulty level in semester two. Similarly, 33% of the responses indicated a concern with work load in semester two. Both of these concerns may have prompted the large percentage of students returning to General Studies because they may have felt more secure and confident with a familiar program and familiar instructors. Also, General Studies is the only program at Lethbridge Community College that offers a wide range and variety of courses, from academic to recreational to skills development to humanities, which may have indicated students were 'shopping' around for courses that best served their needs (academic, social, physical, etc.) at that time.

Of the students who did not return to Lethbridge Community College for a second semester, 9% were from the control group and 20% were from the experimental group. Although I was not able to gather specific information as to why students didn't return to Lethbridge Community College, I realize there could be as many reasons as there were leavers.

One factor that did have an effect on the experimental group was that if the student did not successfully complete the required courses (conditions and COL120), he or she was not allowed back into General Studies without reapplying. Therefore, if a student was required to take ENG101 in semester one and failed the course, that student was not allowed

to return to General Studies without reapplying. However, this would not prevent that student from applying to enter another program (with no specific reading, writing, and or math requirements) at Lethbridge Community College in the second semester.

Some of the non-returning students may have gone on to other post-secondary institutions in semester two. Or financial concerns, as illustrated in Figure 4.4 (41% of total responses), may have been a factor in why some of the Initiative students (experimental group) did not return for a second semester. There were 19 survey responses indicating students were working either part-time or full-time while attending college, which may have been a result of financial concerns in semester one also. In addition, Figure 4.3 indicated that according to the survey responses by the Initiative students, 8% stated that they were not returning to post-secondary education.

Finally, the survey showed that 43% of the respondents relocated in order to attend Lethbridge Community College. Homesickness may have been a possibility as to why some of the Initiative students did not return for a second semester. This conclusion is also in light of the fact that 58% of the Initiative student population was between the ages of 18 and 19, and relocation to college may have been their first experience away from home for a period of time.

In support of my hypothesis that the retention of Initiative Program students would be higher than that of students with similar entry conditions who did not participate in the Initiative Program, it is apparent that the retention was in fact higher for the non-Initiative Program students. Without comparing the two groups in this study, I believe that a retention rate of 80% for the Initiative Program students is significant. In looking at retention rates, I cannot state with any confidence that the Initiative Program made a positive impact on the

Initiative Program students (experimental group). However, a continuation of this study with the same sample groups may show a more definite trend in retention. Furthermore, maintaining data on subsequent Initiative Program students at Lethbridge Community College would also provide retention information necessary for program recommendations regarding enrollment procedures and retention trends.

Was the Initiative Program Successful?

Program evaluation is important in helping institutions justify funding for the program and in determining if the program accomplished what it originally set out to accomplish. The Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College was a pilot program introduced in 2000. The data indicated that a vast majority of students who participated in the Initiative Program were not only successful in terms of achieving higher than 1.49 GPA scores over two semesters, but also returned to Lethbridge Community College in their second semester.

The survey helped to shed some light on the data results and the success of the Initiative Program. When the General Studies Initiative students were asked about their overall satisfaction with the delivery of Initiative Program courses (ENG101, RDG101, MTH102, COL120), there was a strong positive response for three of the four courses. Table 5.2 shows the break down of responses according to degree of satisfaction and individual courses.

Table 5.2

Survey Responses on Initiative Student Satisfaction of Delivery of Course Material

Survey Question #2: Overall, were you satisfied with how the instructors delivered course material in the listed courses?

	% Yes	% Undecided	% No
English 101 (<i>n</i> = 42)	98	2	0
Reading 101 (<i>n</i> = 38)	50	13	37
Math 102 (<i>n</i> = 5)	80	0	20
Independent Study 151 (<i>n</i> = 42)	98	2	0

Note: The Independent Study 151 (IND151) course was later changed to College Success 120 (COL120). The course curriculum, requirements, and objectives did not change when the name of the course was changed after the pilot semester.

The satisfaction percent for Reading 101 was quite a bit lower than the other three courses. From concerns raised by those students, it appeared that the Reading instructor's teaching style and disciplinary methods were not compatible with most of the students in that course. This issue was raised during class discussion in the COL120 class and became evident in the students' comments on the survey. Encouraging students to have a voice in their education was important, and this issue provided an important discussion on instructor/student relations. Allowing the students to discuss their concerns helped them realize they were taken seriously, and more importantly helped them realize the difference between approaching issues objectively rather than with unjustified prejudice or bias. Once

the objective facts were presented, the students' legitimate concerns brought about a change of instructor for the following semester.

The survey responses indicated a similar pattern to the previous responses when the students were asked how satisfied they were with the content of the Initiative Program courses. The percent of course content satisfaction is illustrated in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Survey Responses on Initiative Student Satisfaction of Course Content

Survey Question #3: Overall, were you satisfied with the content of the listed courses?

	% Yes	% Undecided	% No
English 101 (<i>n</i> = 42)	95	5	0
Reading 101 (<i>n</i> = 38)	63	5	32
Math 102 (<i>n</i> = 5)	80	0	20
Independent Study 151 (<i>n</i> = 42)	90	10	0

Note: The Independent Study 151 (IND151) course was later changed to College Success 120 (COL120). The course curriculum, requirements, and objectives did not change when the name of the course was changed after the pilot semester.

According to the students' responses, Reading 101 did not rate as high as the other three Initiative Program courses; however, when I compared these responses to Table 5.0 (Registration & Successful Completion of Conditional Courses) the same pattern did not emerge between the successful completion of RDG101 and ENG101. In other words, 73% of the RDG101 students were successful, and 78% of the ENG101 students were successful. This difference is not nearly as vast as the survey responses may have indicated. As a result

of this observation, it appeared that the incompatibility of the Reading instructor and the Reading students did not result in a drastically lower success rate than that of the English course. Therefore, I may be able to assume that students may still be motivated to succeed regardless of how an instructor delivers course content.

The success and retention results of the Initiative Program students were promising, and if I compare the percents of successful students over two semesters, it is clear that the Initiative Program students were somewhat successful in terms of the students' academic performances and continuation in semester two. Furthermore, the survey responses and student comments also indicated the Initiative Program was successful in terms of student satisfaction. Although these measures of academic success and student satisfaction are limited to the small sample size and small data set of this study, the Initiative Program will continue at Lethbridge Community College and will help this research evolve into a more longitudinal study.

Was The Initiative Program Effective?

According to the data, the effectiveness of the Initiative Program was not clearly evident in the first semester. Initiative students who were engaged and participated in many aspects of college (such as sports, social events, clubs, etc.), not just course work, during their first semester seemed to have experienced greater satisfaction and success in the second semester. The curriculum for the COL120 course, which was the treatment for the experimental group, deliberately focused on interaction with peers and instructors, involvement in college services, participation in campus activities and understanding the learning process. Although COL120 was only taken in semester one by Initiative Program students, I argue that the components of that course were somewhat effective over a full

academic year. I based this conclusion on the increase of Initiative Program students' GPA scores in semester two as opposed to the decrease in GPA scores of non-Initiative Program students in semester two.

In looking at the effectiveness of the Initiative Program in its pilot semester, I believe the data collected did indicate that the Initiative Program did achieve what it set out to achieve. Furthermore, much of the data and correlations that were presented throughout this study did not reflect any causal relationships whatsoever. I predicted that the retention rate would be higher for the Initiative students than the non-Initiative students, but it was difficult to determine whether or not the effectiveness of the Initiative Program had an influence on student retention because there was no feedback from the leavers of either group to obtain some sense of why they left college. Therefore a comparison could not be made between leavers from the control group and the experimental group to see if the Initiative Program made a difference in the reasons why students left college. In other words, it becomes challenging to modify the effectiveness of the Initiative Program if the objective or goal is to ensure students stay in college. However, continued feedback and program evaluation will help maintain the overall effectiveness of the Initiative Program in future semesters.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Studies Initiative Program at Lethbridge Community College remains an important program for conditionally accepted students because the program provides the academic, social, and personal support necessary to succeed in their first year of college. This type of student support is deliberately structured and is administered through the COL120 course. According to my hypothesis, the percentage of successful Initiative Program students, over two academic semesters, was higher than non-Initiative students with similar entry conditions, and although the retention for both groups was high in semester two, the percentage of returning Initiative students was lower than the percentage of returning non-Initiative students. Since this study indicated overall positive results and potential, the future of the Initiative Program looks very promising in meeting the concerns of student success and retention.

Initiative Program Recommendations

In the first semester of administering this program, there was uncertainty expressed by the students who were required to participate in the program. This came as a result of poor orientation to the program and what the nature of the program was. Students received a letter stating that they were placed in the program and that they were to meet for their first COL120 class on a specified date. Many students were reluctant to attend that first COL120 class because they had no idea what the course was about since they themselves did not personally register in that course. They were automatically registered in that course, along with condition courses, by the General Studies Program Coordinator. To help clarify the purpose and participation in the Initiative Program, in the subsequent semester we included

an Initiative Program orientation in conjunction with the broader General Studies orientation for new students. As soon as the students replied that they accepted a seat in the General Studies Program, the coordinator invited all students to the orientation. This orientation helped clarify some of the vagueness experienced by the previous semester Initiative students. In other words, an orientation to an Initiative-type of program is highly recommended because registration in Initiative courses is done by the coordinator and the conditions of the program and courses is unique to other Lethbridge Community College programs.

The benefits of an orientation also include explaining to the Initiative students that the Initiative Program is a positive intervention. Often when students realize their reading, writing, and or math skills are below the acceptance level, they are naturally disheartened and resentful when they are placed in those conditional courses. The orientation helps to promote a positive attitude and explains the Initiative Program in such a way that the students realize the program will be beneficial rather than a hindrance to their education.

I also recommend that the registrar find a way to 'flag' the Initiative students within its computerized student information program. Without the registration personnel knowing which students are Initiative students the chance of Initiative students dropping or withdrawing from conditional courses is a concern. Students in the Initiative Program are not allowed to drop or withdraw from ENG101, RDG101, MTH102, or COL120; they must successfully complete all of their conditional courses in order to return to the General Studies Program the following semester. If the Initiative students were 'flagged', then if an Initiative student tried to drop or withdraw from a conditional course the registration personnel would see immediately that the student was an Initiative student and could inform the student that

he or she might benefit from speaking to the program coordinator regarding the drop or withdrawal of the conditional course.

Similarly, if the Initiative students were “flagged”, then any Initiative student who wanted to withdraw from college could be given a questionnaire to fill out indicating some possible reasons why she or she is withdrawing from college. The questionnaire could be brief, but the responses would be valuable in looking at how the Initiative Program might influence retention. If the questionnaire were given to the student at the time of withdrawal, the return rate would be much higher than if the questionnaire were mailed out after the withdrawal had taken place. Attempting to understand why students withdraw from college would be clearer if we had personal input from the leavers rather than trying to make assumptions based on scores and numbers.

I also recommend going directly to the Initiative students when looking at retention for the following semester. A discussion during the last class of COL120 would be an opportune time to talk about future goals and plans that the students may have. For the record, a question specifically targeted at “next semester’s plans” on the student survey, which students complete as an assignment for COL120, may provide some insight as to why successful students may not have returned to Lethbridge Community College for their second semester. From this feedback, I might begin to notice a correlation (over time) between the concerns students have in their future semester and the reasons for not returning to college.

COL120 Course Recommendations

Having the COL120 course was essential to the success of the Initiative Program because the course was used as the vehicle for student support. Without this one-credit

course as a component of the Initiative Program, even though recommended, the students may not have sought support and assistance on their own initiative.

I also recommend that this course be as interactive as possible. Unlike some of the other courses students register in, COL120 focuses on academic, social, and personal support that requires constant dialogue among students and instructors. One thing that worked well was the variety of guest speakers brought into the course. The selection of guest speakers was based on topics the instructor as well as the students felt were important and useful. For example, just before midterm exams, a counselor was brought in to speak about stress relief and had the students perform stress relief exercises. Other guest speakers included experts on test anxiety, study strategies, motivation, health issues, and scholarships. Students' council and campus recreation also had their place on the guest speaker list.

At the beginning and end of the semester, the students wrote the Emotional Quotient Intelligence test. A qualified proctor administered the test on both occasions and explained to the students the benefits of writing the Emotional Quotient Intelligence test and how the results could be interpreted. I do not recommend using this test in the future because the students, for the most part, could not see the relevance of taking the test at that time. There might be more relevance to the students if the test were taken in their graduating semester because many of the components related to employee relations, personality traits, and disposition. Yes, these areas are just as important in helping students through college, but many of the students did not see the connection. Furthermore, the lack of 'value' students received from this test did not justify the cost of administering the test.

If the COL120 course is to address student success on a more personal level, I think another form of personal assessment should be implemented. For example, I think students

would benefit greatly from doing a learning styles inventory to discover what type of learners they are in order to choose study strategies that work best for them. Knowing the characteristics of different learning styles would also help students understand why they might grasp a math concept easier than a grammar concept, for example. In other words, I believe it is valuable for students to understand how they learn as individuals as well as how the learning process in general works. Therefore, I recommend a personal assessment similar to a learning styles inventory.

COL120 Scheduling Recommendations

In the first semester, the COL120 course ran for one 50-minute period each week for 16 weeks. The 50-minute periods were too short, and it was difficult to cover any content in a meaningful way in only 50 minutes, especially when class discussion was a large focus in this course. A few students also recommended on the survey that they thought the class time was too short. Therefore, I recommended that the class time be extended to 90 minutes. The 90-minute class time proved to be successful with the second Initiative Program group. This lengthened class time also meant that the course would run for approximately twelve weeks in the 90-minute lecture format. Since COL120 was a one-credit course it meant 16 hours of lecture were required for the course. After the first twelve weeks of lecture, the students were responsible for maintaining their daytimers and checking in with the COL120 instructor on scheduled dates. The individual appointments with the instructor lasted approximately 10-15 minutes and included a brief summary on how the students were doing in their courses. In addition, the students used their individual appointment times to pick up journal topics and assignments for COL120. These individual meeting times were mandatory and were considered an assignment in and of themselves. The COL120 students and the instructor then

reconvened for a last class during the final week of the semester. This gave everyone an opportunity to talk about the semester, and complete the last COL120 assignment – the survey. I think giving the students more independence in the last quarter of the semester was a good modification to the Initiative Program because students were able to experiment with and utilize survival skills, study strategies, and time management skills learned at the beginning of the semester. In other words, delivering COL120 content material up front gave students an opportunity to use the material independently and transfer those skills to other courses and situations in the same semester. Condensing the class lecture times to the beginning of the semester proved to be worthwhile for the second group of Initiative students, and a minimum 90-minute lecture period is recommended.

Instructor Teamwork Recommendations

Although there is one instructor teaching the COL120 course, it is important for that instructor to maintain open lines of communication with the instructors who teach ENG101, RDG101, and MTH102. Typically, it is rare that instructors from different disciplines will discuss a student's progress; often times student progress is considered confidential and information is not readily shared among that student's instructors. However, because the goal of the Initiative Program is to ensure as many students as possible succeed, it is necessary for the instructors to share information regarding an Initiative student's academic progress. For example, if the RDG101 instructor has not seen one of the Initiative students for a week, the RDG101 instructor will contact the COL120 instructor to find out any information about the absent student. If students fall behind in any of their courses, the instructor will discuss this with the COL120 instructor to see if there is any intervention that will help the student get back on track.

The first semester Lethbridge Community College ran the Initiative Program, there was no orientation for the conditional course instructors. In retrospect, this was an oversight. The English, Reading, and Math instructors did not know which students in their courses were Initiative students; therefore, when an Initiative student started skipping classes or fell behind in course work, the instructor did not realize he or she could have contacted the COL120 instructor to try and track down the student. In other words, the COL120 instructor was also there to support the instructors of the Initiative students. Therefore, I think it is important to provide Initiative Program orientation to the instructors at the onset of the program, and to all new instructors who may be teaching conditional courses.

To help make students more accountable for their courses, a course tracking assignment worked well. The COL120 students tracked their own progress in their conditional courses. Twice a semester the Initiative students took a progress report tracking assignment to each of their conditional course instructors and had the instructors fill out the sheet. The report asked the instructors to record the number of absences, number of missing assignments/tests, etc. and current grade for that particular student. This assignment created awareness for the students as to how they were doing in their courses according to their instructors. However, students who knew they were not doing well in their courses did not return a completed progress report from their instructors. In this case, the COL120 instructor made contact with the instructors to determine the student's progress and whether or not there might be a danger of failure. If time and instructor schedules allow, I recommend periodic meetings be held with instructors who teach conditional courses. An initial meeting at the beginning of the semester could ensure that all instructors who teach Initiative students would become familiarized with the Initiative Program; another meeting two months into the

semester would also allow instructors to air any concerns about particular Initiative students or to provide general feedback as to how the students are doing. I think this would be an important meeting because it would ensure necessary intervention could be in place before the end of the semester. Finally, a meeting at the end of the semester would enable instructors to look at the entire semester and make recommendations or considerations for the following semester. This final meeting would also give the instructors an opportunity to look at what factors may have influenced the students' successes or failures.

At this point data is still being collected for the subsequent semesters of the original Initiative Program students (experimental group) and non-Initiative Program students (control group) from this study and will be analyzed and reported in a subsequent report. Running parallel to the original sample of this study is data collection and analyses of subsequent groups of General Studies Initiative Program students. Eventually each new group of Initiative Program students will be compared to determine if a more accurate and consistent pattern emerges resulting from the relationship between conditionally accepted students and the Initiative Program. Finally, since many post-secondary institutions are concerned with student success and retention, it is important to continue this study in hopes that other institutions may replicate a similar program for the benefit of their students.

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Appendix A

Initiative Student Survey Sample

(Questions and responses have been single-spaced to converse paper)

General Studies Initiative Program Feedback – Survey

The following questions require your honest and thoughtful responses regarding the operation and relevance of the Initiative Program.

Please do not put your name on this document; all responses are confidential. If you do not want your responses to be included in the research, you can indicate this at the end of the survey. If you choose not to complete this survey, please put the incomplete survey in the envelope provided. Thank you.

INITIATIVE PROGRAM COURSES

1. Check all courses you were required to take this semester.

English 101 Reading 101 Math 102

2. Overall, were you satisfied with how the instructors delivered course material in the above courses? (answer only those that apply to you)

English 101	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Reading 101	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Math 102	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Ind151	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Comments:			

3. Overall, were you satisfied with the content of the above courses? (answer only those that apply to you)

English 101	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Reading 101	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Math 102	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Ind151	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Comments:			

4. Which of the following courses did you also take this semester?

College Success 101 Developmental Studies (Learning Centre)

(Appendix A continues)

Appendix A (continued)

INVOLVEMENT AND INTERACTION WITH OTHERS

5. At the beginning of the semester, approximately how many students did you know in your IND151 groups?

6. How many IND151 classmates, now, do you feel comfortable with in discussing academic or personal interests?

_____ 0 _____ 1 to 5 _____ 6 to 10 _____ 11 to 15 _____ more than 15

7. Throughout this semester, which of the following LCC services did you use more than once?

_____ Learning Centre _____ Academic Advisor _____ Health Services
_____ Counsellors

8. Did you ever drop in to visit any of your instructors to talk about *other than* course requirements? (for example, personal, work, career, next semester, LCC programs, etc.)

_____ yes _____ no

9. When desired or necessary, did you feel comfortable approaching your instructors outside of class time?

_____ yes _____ undecided _____ no

Comments:

10. Did you get involved or participate in any LCC activities? (for example, Campus Recreation, Clubs, Students' Association, cabarets, etc.)

_____ yes _____ no

If yes, list involvements and activities.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

11. Which of the following classroom activities did you find most valuable in learning course content?

_____ group work _____ independent work _____ class discussions _____ lecture

Comments:

(Appendix A continues)

Appendix A (continued)

12. Of the following IND151 assignments, which one helped you the most in understanding yourself as a first semester college students? (**Check only one**)

- personal journal writing
 guest speakers
 seminar discussions on student selected issues

13. Did you feel your opinions were respected by your IND151 instructor?

- yes undecided no

Comments:

OVERALL INITIATIVE PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS AND CONSIDERATION

14. For you, did the advantages of the Initiative Program outweigh the disadvantages?

- yes no

Explain briefly:

15. Check any **academic** concerns you may have **right now**, regarding **next semester**.
(check all that apply)

- level of difficulty demanding work load not ready/prepared
 confidence in ability not returning to college or university

Comments:

16. Check any **non-academic** concerns you may have **right now**, regarding **next semester**.
(check all that apply)

- financial employment family
 personal relationship making new college friendships

Comments:

17. What would you recommend for improving next year's Initiative Program?

18. Briefly summarize (2-3 sentences) your first semester at LCC.

(Appendix A continues)

Appendix A (continued)

STUDENT POPULATION INFORMATION

19. How many years has it been since you last attended formal education? (eg. high school)

_____ number of years or _____ less than 1 year

20. What is your age? _____ 18-23 _____ 24-29 _____ 30-35 _____ 36+

21. Sex _____ female _____ male

22. Please check all items that apply to you.

_____ no children _____ children under 18 years old _____ other dependents (elderly)

_____ working part time at paid employment while attending college

_____ working full time at paid employment while attending college

_____ no paid employment

_____ living with roommates _____ living alone _____ living with family

_____ student loans _____ grants _____ bursary _____ other

23. Did you need to relocate in order to attend LCC? _____ yes _____ no

Any further comments you wish to add:

THANK YOU!

Although the information you provided will remain anonymous and confidential, you may now choose not to have your responses included in the University of Lethbridge research project.

_____ I DO NOT wish to have my responses included in the university research project.

Notes: IND151 was later changed to COL120 in January 2001. A student volunteer administered, collected, and delivered the surveys. The data was tallied and typed by the General Studies Office Assistant. This survey was used as an IND151 in-class assignment. See Appendix E for a copy of the student information handout regarding this survey and Appendix F for a revised student survey.

Appendix B

IND151 Course Outline

COURSE OUTLINE

COL 120 – General Studies Initiative

(instructor information and class times have been omitted)

Course Description:

This General Studies course is designed for students in the Initiative Program. Students will pursue a mixture of self-guided and teacher directed activities. Students will participate in seminars and peer activities that leave them better prepared to face the challenges of student life.

Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will:

1. Be aware of personal strengths and weaknesses related to student management skills
2. Have gained effective communication skills
3. Demonstrate effective problem-solving strategies
4. Feel comfortable with membership in the Initiative Program
5. Feel comfortable within the college environment
6. Know when and how to access academic, social and personal support
7. Develop and demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning.

Required Text(s) and Materials:

Duotang

Day Planner (week at a glance)

Assignment/Activity/Exam List, Due Dates, and Value of Each:

Journal Assignments	40%
Class Participation	50% (includes attendance)
In-class Assignments	<u>10%</u>
	100%

It is the responsibility of the student to hand in course work on assigned dates. Late assignments will be penalized 10% per day. If a student is absent for an in-class assignment, he or she cannot make up that assignment. Students **MUST** notify the instructor (phone, email or written note) prior to class time if they will be absent.

(Appendix B continues)

Appendix B (continued)

Other Learning Resources:

Students are encouraged to use the resources provided by Student Services, the Learning Centre, the library and program faculty.

Instructor's Teaching and Learning Styles (Practices)

As much as possible, students will have input into the course content in order to address learning needs. Student-teacher and student-student interaction will be established through the routine use of strategies that require students to respond and react to course content. Discussions through teacher-led and student-led seminars will provide opportunities for active participation.

Grading System

Grades will be recorded as CR (credit) or NCR (non-credit). *Students who receive NCR will NOT be able to continue in the General Studies Program.*

These grades will be determined in the following manner:

CR 90% or higher (assignments, participation, attendance)

NCR 89% or lower (assignments, participation, attendance)

Attendance Policy:

Attendance and regular completion of assignments will be critical for success in this class.

Supplemental Examination:

COL 120 is not subject to supplemental examination.

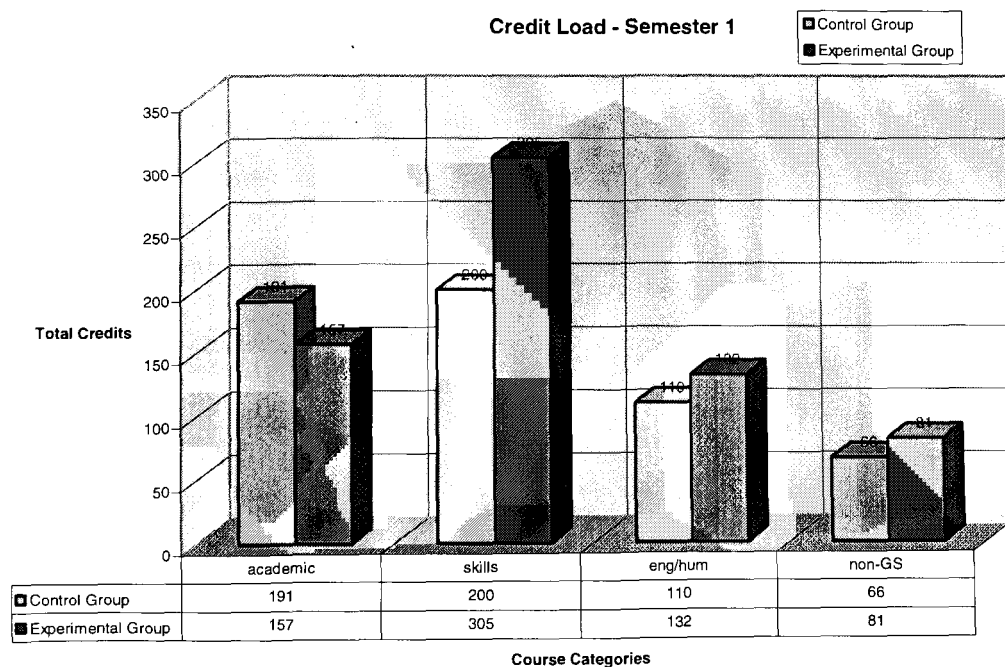
Note: Two sections (Course Work Used as Examples & Retention of Student Records) were omitted because they focus more on Lethbridge Community College policy rather than specific information for this particular course.

Appendix C

Student Credit Load for Semester 1 and 2

Figure C1 illustrates the types of courses students registered in for their first semester. The experimental group registered in a higher percentage of skills development courses than the control group did. On the other hand, the control group carried a slightly higher academic credit load than the experimental group did. The high percentage of skills development courses taken by the experimental group in this first semester may have influenced this group's academic success in its second semester. Furthermore, figure C2 shows an increase in the academic credit load in semester two for the experimental group.

Figure C1: *Credit Load by Course Categories, Semester 1 Both Groups*



Note: The following is an explanation of the types of courses included in each of the four categories:

academic = Academic Courses (eg. Science, Math, Social Sciences)

(Appendix C continues)

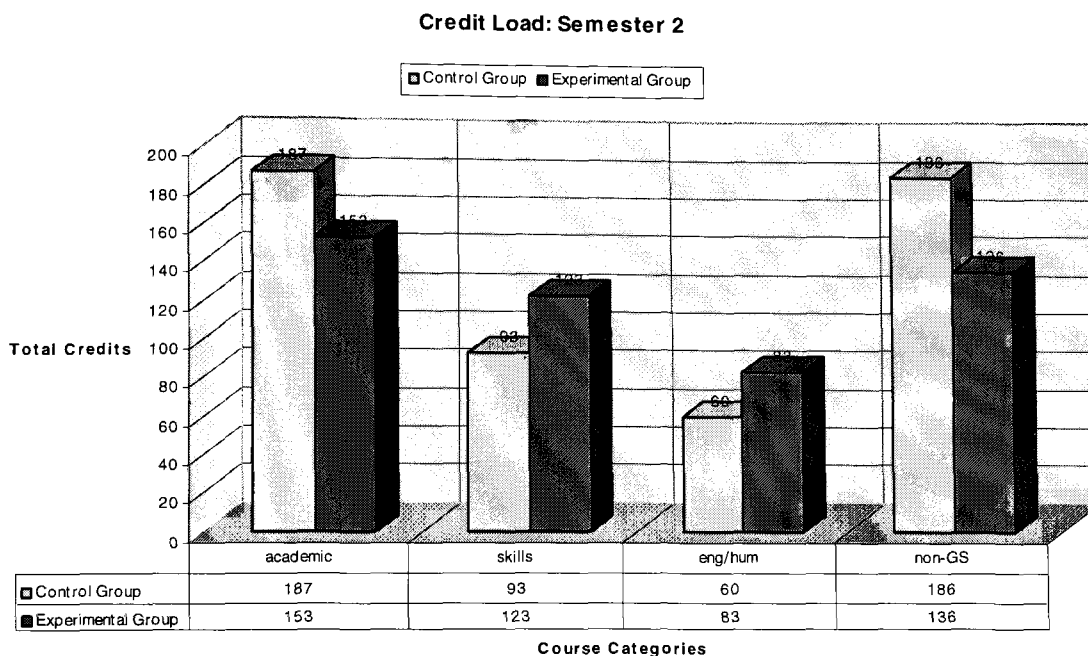
Appendix C (continued)

skills = Skills Development Courses (eg. Computers, Communication, Physical Education, COL120)

eng/hum = English & Humanities Courses (eg. English, Music, Logic)

non-GS = Courses from other LCC program areas (eg. Business Administration, Criminal Justice)

Figure C2: *Credit Load by Course Categories, Semester Two, Both Groups*



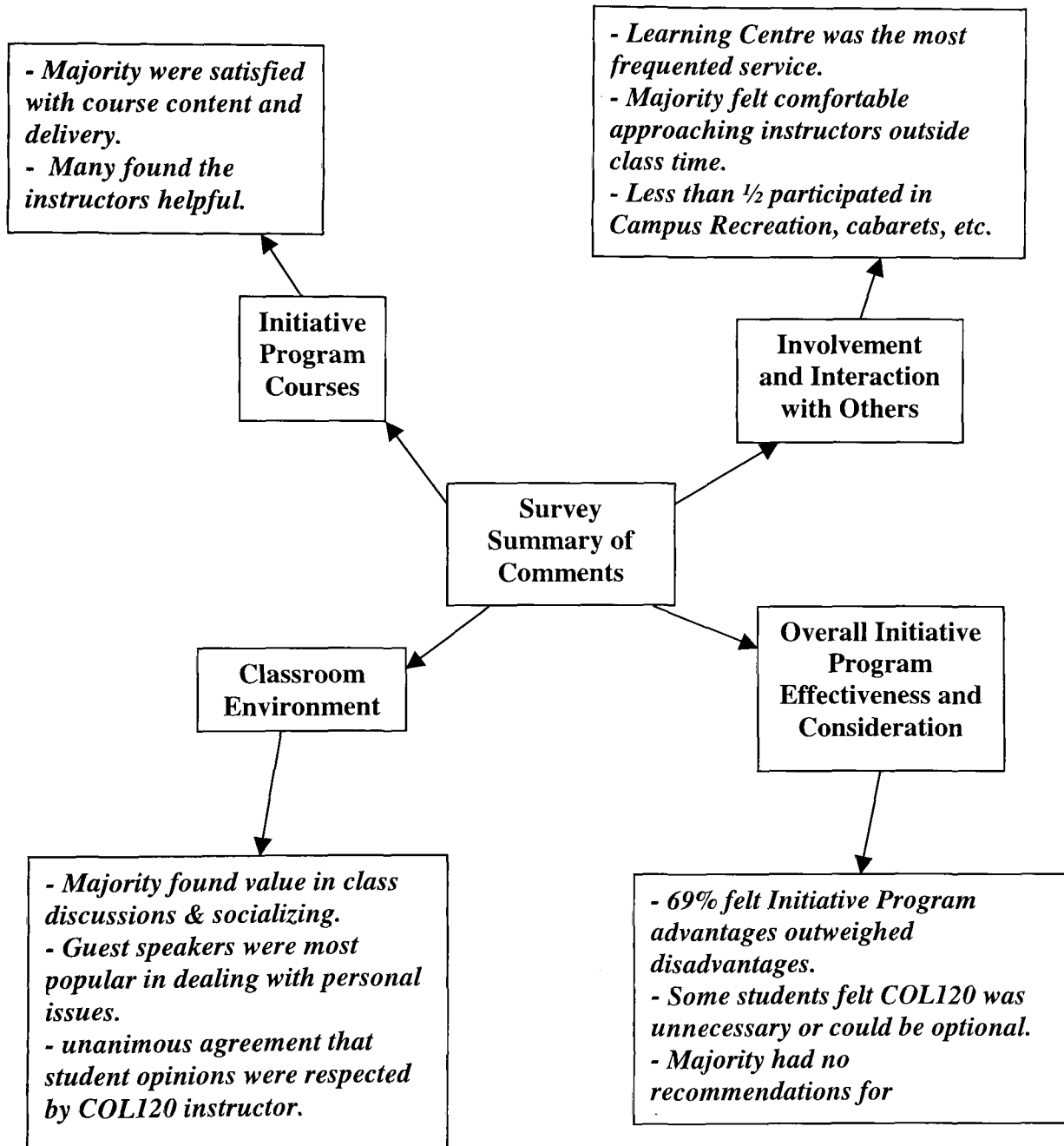
Note: The explanation of the types of courses in each of the four categories is the same as Figure C1.

The types of courses students register in may be a factor in student success and retention. Therefore, continued tracking and research of credit load and GPA scores will be closely monitored to see if a trend emerges. Although the sample size was small, I may be able to infer from Figures C1 and C2 some possible explanations regarding GPA scores and retention. For example, the experimental group may have increased its average GPA score in semester two because of the high credit load in the skills development area in its first semester.

Appendix D

Summary of Survey Responses and Comments

General Studies Initiative Program Feedback – Survey



Note: The survey consisted of 23 items (see Appendix A). Thirty-nine of 43 respondents were used for this study (4 respondents were excluded due to part-time student status).

Appendix E

Student Survey Information Hand-out

Student Survey Information of the General Studies Initiative Program

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past, I have witnessed high numbers of withdrawal and failure of first semester college students across Canada, and I want to reverse this trend. This concern has prompted me to conduct research through the University of Lethbridge Master of Education Program. My goal is to gather, analyze and evaluate crucial information that will assist in my research and benefit future first semester college students.

PURPOSE OF YOUR SURVEY FEEDBACK

This General Studies Initiative Program is a first at LCC; furthermore, this type of program is rare among Canadian colleges and universities. This makes your survey feedback important in helping us address first semester concerns and will pave the way for other students across Canadian institutions. Your feedback will also serve as a valuable tool to help us modify and improve the Initiative Program at LCC.

Your participation in this survey contributes towards 10% of your final grade in IND151. You should be able to accurately and honestly complete the survey in approximately 15 minutes. In addition, it is important for me to mention; *if you do not want your responses to be considered in my university research, you can indicate that at the end of the survey.*

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will never be written or mentioned on the survey or in any of my research. The information I collect will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality; this will also allow you to respond with the utmost honesty and sincerity.

Confidentiality will also be exercised when you fill out the survey. As a class, you will designate a student to administer, collect and deliver all surveys, in a sealed envelop, to TE2259. All written comments will be typed before I read them.

AFTER THE SURVEY

If you would like to see the results of the survey, you are encouraged to get in touch with me. I will be more than happy to share my research with you. In addition, I would like you to complete a follow-up survey in April 2001. This survey will help determine if your participation in the Initiative Program was beneficial to the continuation and success of your college education. I will arrange a time and location that is most convenient for you and contact you in April.

If you have any concerns, questions, or suggestions please contact me by phone: 382-6924, email: c.takeda@lethbridgecollege.ab.ca or visit: PA2126.

*****Students who have an active voice in their education will make a difference!*****

Appendix F

Revised Student Survey for Initiative Program

(Questions and answers have been single-space to conserve paper)

General Studies Initiative Program Questionnaire

The following questions require your honest and thoughtful responses regarding the value and relevance of the Initiative Program and COL120. Your input is valuable and will help us improve the program. You will receive credit for completing this questionnaire as it is part of the assignment grade for COL120.

Please do not put your name on this questionnaire; all responses are confidential. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided. Thank you.

Please check the appropriate response.

1. What is your gender? female male

2. What is your age? 19 or younger 20 – 22
 23 – 25 25 or older

3. Did you need to relocate in order to attend LCC? yes no

4. What is your first language? English Japanese
 Blackfoot other _____(please specify)

5. How many years has it been since you last attended formal education? (eg.high school, college, university)
 less than 1 year number of years

6. Is this your first semester at a college/university? yes no

7. How many credits did you register in at the beginning of this semester? _____

8. Check all course you were required to take this semester as conditions.
 English 101 Reading 101 Math 102

9. Throughout this semester, which of the following LCC services did you use more than one time? (Check all that apply)
 Learning Centre Academic Advisor Health Services
 Counsellor

(Appendix F continues)

Appendix F (continued)

10. Did you get involved or participate in any LCC student activities? For example, Campus Recreation, Clubs, Students' Association, Barn, etc.
 yes no
 If yes, list involvements and activities:
11. Check any **academic concerns** you may have **right now**, regarding **next semester**.
(check all that apply)
- level of difficulty demanding work load not ready/prepared
 confidence in ability not returning to college or university
 other (please specify) _____
 Comments:
12. Check any **non-academic concerns** you may have **right now**, regarding **next semester**. *(check all that apply)*
- financial employment family personal relationship
 making new college friendships other (please specify) _____
 Comments:
13. Please check all items that apply to you.
- no children child/children under 18 years old
 other dependents (eg. caring for elderly or other person)
14. Please check all items that apply to you.
- "I am **working part-time** at paid employment while attending college."
 "I am **working full-time** at paid employment while attending college."
 "I am **NOT working** for a wage."
 "I am **living with roommates**."
 "I am **living alone**."
 "I am **living with family/host family**."
 "I am **living with a partner** (boyfriend or girlfriend)"
15. Please check all items that apply to you.
- "I have **student loans** to help pay for this semester."
 "I have **grants** to help pay for this semester."
 "I have a **bursary** to help pay for this semester."
 "I have a **scholarship** to help pay for this semester."
 "I am paying for this semester **on my own (or family)**."
 other (please specify) _____

(Appendix F continues)

Appendix F (continued)

16. Was the COL120 course more effective as a 90 minute class (with individual scheduled meetings) than a 50 minute class each week?
 _____ yes _____ no
 Comments:
17. Did the COL120 lecture content benefit your other courses? _____ yes _____ no
 Comments:
18. For you, did the advantages of the Initiative Program and COL120 outweigh the disadvantages? _____ yes _____ no
 Comments:
19. How can General Studies improve the Initiative Program and COL120?
 Comments:
20. Are you returning to LCC next semester?
 _____ yes _____ no _____ undecided

Please add any further comments you have:

Thank You!

Your input and feedback is crucial in order to continue providing necessary services and programs to LCC students. Thank you for your honesty and feedback.

Note: The modifications in this survey came as a result of instructor and student feedback on the lack of relevance and necessity of some of the items on the first survey. The Initiative Program continues to use this questionnaire for student feedback and tracking.