USING DATA TO INFORM DECISIONS: INTRUSIVE FACULTY ADVISING AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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The study describes an initiative to increase retention at a 2-year college in the Northeast United States. The process involved a collaborative, intrusive advising approach to intervene with students at-risk for academic failure or experiencing difficulty with the transition to the college. Components of the mixed-method design included collecting, analyzing, and discussing data from prematriculation surveys, focus group discussions, advisement logs, and attendance/tardy records. Formative data were available for faculty advisors so they could monitor and intervene with students who were experiencing academic difficulties early in their college experience. Results from the first-year implementation showed that collaborative, intrusive advising increases faculty advisor communication and has the potential to increase retention at the college level.

The definition of a typical college student as White and middle-class has dramatically shifted toward a more equitable representation of diverse races, classes, and ages in this country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). The challenges for so-called “nontraditional” students are formidable considering that higher education was not designed with a wide demographic in mind (Kim, 2002; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003). Research on nontraditional students tends to focus on comparisons with traditional-age students. The inquiry compares rates of access (Adelman, 2002), demographics (e.g., first generation, gender, SES) (Kinsella, 1998), motivation (Harju & Eppler, 1997), psychosocial characteristics (Ar buckle & Gale,
1996; Senter & Senter, 1998), and metacognition (Justice & Dornan, 2001) to name a few. However, there is a need to understand the collegiate experiences and challenges of the nontraditional student population (Bamber & Tett, 2003; Laing & Robinson, 2003).

Inquiry on the experiences of nontraditional students in college configurations such as 2-year schools and commuter schools is essential in order to improve the educational experience and subsequent retention of nontraditional students (Leonard, 2002). Subsequently, advisors can reach out and provide the necessary supports and encouragement to facilitate the successful transition to college. This form of intrusive advising has been associated with positive academic outcomes for students at-risk of academic failure (Molina & Abelman, 2000; Abelman & Molina, 2001). Intrusive advising is based on principles of developmental advising but also focuses on intentional and consistent interactions between the advisor and his or her advisees (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001). Advisors using an intrusive approach initiate early contact; help the student to identify strengths and weaknesses; and develop plans for academic, social, and organization improvement. They also continually help the student monitor and assess progress toward the stated goals (Garing, 1992). The purpose of the current study was to understand the challenges for nontraditional students and to assess the impact of faculty intervention with students at greatest risk of retention. The study employed a dynamic baseline assessment, intervention, and modification model that informed faculty and staff about the immediate and individual needs of students at the college.

Lynch & Bishop-Clark (1998) studied the challenges facing nontraditional students at two different settings. The first campus primarily served traditional students; the second consisted of two branch campuses where a considerable number of nontraditional students were enrolled. A comparison of experiences found that students at the main campus were significantly more likely than students did on the branch campuses to state that professors do not realize the out-of-class responsibilities of older students and tend to design their classes for younger students. Students were uniformly positive about being in classes where both age groups were represented and preferred studying in mixed age classes.

Additional studies have compared nontraditional and traditional student characteristics such as procrastination and motivation. Prohaska, Morrill, Atiles, and Perez (2001) found that nontraditional students reported higher levels of procrastination on completing weekly reading assignments, but low procrastination on completing major paper assignments and attending class than traditional
students in a large campus in New York City. Donohue and Wong (1997) examined motivational data from the College Student Satisfaction Survey and an academic motivation scale from the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire and found that nontraditional students' work orientation was significantly higher than traditional students. Significant correlations between academic motivation and student satisfaction for nontraditional students were reported. Justice and Dorman (2001) also examined similarities and differences in academic motivation between traditional and nontraditional students. Student scores on well-known motivation and metacognitive surveys found that nontraditional students used more metacognitive skills to assist with studying. Overall findings revealed little differences between traditional and nontraditional students in regard to self-efficacy, self-regulation, test anxiety, and reported strategy use. Some gender and age interactions were reported. Older females reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation than younger students and older males.

Laing and Robinson (2003) used an emergent qualitative design to better understand the complex relationship between the teaching and learning environments and nontraditional students' decision to withdrawal from an institution of higher learning in the UK. Structured and semistructured interviews with staff and students revealed three components of the withdrawal process: intention, action, and belief. Bowl (2001) also conducted in-depth interviews with 32 nontraditional students in order to understand their perceptions of the barriers to entering higher education. The findings focused on the stories of three individuals. Themes generated from the case studies revealed that nontraditional students experienced many challenges entering and remaining in higher education. Financial concerns and a lack of responsiveness from the institution were identified as major barriers to entrance into higher education. Another major theme was “time poverty” (p. 156), where participants described their multiple family, school, and work responsibilities. They reported making difficult decisions about what material to read and having to sneak study time into their busy schedule.

The academic advisement configurations in 2-year colleges can range from admissions counselors, a general advising office staffed by a small cadre of professionals, or assignment to a faculty advisor in the major (Habley, 1983). Advising styles differ from place to place, but given the numbers of students and general lack of professional development around advising, students are likely to experience prescriptive styles and relatively infrequent academic advising.
Nontraditional students may benefit greatly from intrusive advising initiatives because the approach inherently takes individual needs into consideration and focuses on matching interventions and services to those needs. Leonard (2002) described an outreach framework that aligns with the notion of intrusive advising. College counselors collaborate with the local community to identify the broad array of services and supports available on and around campus. Prematriculation assessments help counselors identify students at-risk for particular transition problems including academic difficulties, social challenges, or organizational issues. Meetings and follow-ups with students assure that they feel supported and get connected to the appropriate services. When reviewing the definition of nontraditional students at the community college, Kim (2002) also identified the importance of career counseling to help match nontraditional students to programs and as well as to point out innovations in various fields.

Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams (2001) compared 126 nontraditional, psychology major students' satisfaction with advising. They were randomly assigned to either an intrusive approach or prescriptive advising. Five faculty members provided intrusive advising to the experimental condition. Intrusive advising was evidenced by faculty initiating contact during the first few weeks of students' first semester in the major, with a minimum of one contact per semester, documenting each contact, and continually studying developmental advising in the literature. There were no differences in academic performance in the two groups. However, students who received intrusive advising were more satisfied with their advisor than students in the prescriptive condition. Students in the intrusive condition also reported a higher number of contacts or time spent with their advisor, and they outperformed their intrusive condition counterparts who spent less time with their advisor. These results are consistent with studies which show that students who are receptive to assistance do better than students who resist or are reluctant to receive help from advisors and other academic support systems (Smith, 2005).

**CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY**

The study began when faculty at a 2-year college in the Northeast United States expressed concern about the high rates of attrition, primarily among their nontraditional student population. Members of the Faculty Affairs Committee proposed an initiative to better understand the concerns and needs of their students as they enter and experience college. The initiative included multiple data
collection components and a faculty advisor intervention for students at-risk of academic failure. The first component involved faculty members completing a brief survey about student conduct and student academic preparation for their classes (spring 2003). The second component elicited perception data from a large sample of students attending the college (fall 2003). Based on the results, 10 faculty advisors agreed to intervene, using principles of intrusive advising for students identified as at-risk. For the third component, 14 faculty completed a detailed attendance/student behavior log for the fall (2003) and spring (2004) semesters. Finally, a series of focus group discussions in the spring 2004 semester elicited student perceptions of classroom conduct, their feelings about teaching, and their overall impressions of their experiences on campus. Independently, each component provided useful information about students, their challenges, and experiences at the college. Taken together, the data informed faculty and staff of steps they can take to (a) help students transition successfully to college and (b) assist in retaining students through graduation. The remainder of the paper describes the organization and preliminary findings from each data component and identifies steps for the interpretation and use of the data for continued intervention.

**FACULTY METHOD**

**Sample and Instruments**

**Faculty Survey**
The Faculty Affairs Committee developed a brief survey to quantify anecdotal reports about inappropriate student behavior in four areas including attendance, punctuality, class behavior, and expectations for study time. A total of 16 faculty members returned their completed surveys, representing slightly less than half of the full-time faculty. The first six questions (scored on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 = not a problem to 5 = crisis problem) asked faculty to rate the extent to which attendance, punctuality, motivation, classroom involvement, academic preparation, and student effort were problems. Faculty elaborated on open-ended questions regarding the ways that they implicitly or explicitly expressed their rules or expectations around the four areas. Two additional questions asked faculty to estimate (a) time students spend on preparing for class and (b) the time faculty estimate that students should spend in order to be successful in the class.
Attendance Logs
A total of 14 faculty members agreed to keep a detailed attendance log for their classes \((n = 59)\) in the fall 2003 semester. They reported the number of students who were absent, late, or who disrupted the class with their behavior (talking, cell phone, etc.) each day. Faculty completed the log for each month and returned the logs to a member of the Faculty Affairs Committee. The most complete data was generated for the months of September and October.

Student Survey
Faculty administered the Student Expectations Survey in one of their first classes of the fall 2003 semester. A total of 425 completed surveys were returned. Half of the respondents were in their first year of study at the college. Slightly less than 90% of the participants were women. Of the participants, 75% were Caucasian, 16% African-American, 3% Asian, and 4% Latino. Approximately 50% of the students completing the survey majored in nursing. The sample was slightly overrepresented by females and nursing students, who make up the majority of students at the college. The survey contains 50 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale on issues pertaining to academic motivation (learning goal orientation, performance goal orientation, and self-regulation), student receptivity to services, student engagement, and student perceptions of challenges to academic success. Items and subscales on the survey have been used at other institutions and previous studies, and they demonstrate adequate psychometric properties (Pintrich, Roeser, & De Groot, 1994; Smith, Dai, & Szelest, in press). For the current study, internal consistency estimates ranged from a low of \(\alpha = .55\) for the behavior subscale to a high of \(\alpha = .85\) for the concerns subscale.

Faculty Intervention
Students who scored one standard deviation above or below the mean (above on performance goal orientation and concern; below on learning goal orientation motivation, self-regulation, college engagement, and receptivity) on more than one subscale were identified as potentially at-risk for not being successful academically. A total of 49 students were identified, and 71% percent of identified students were in their first-year of college. Information on at-risk students was provided to faculty advisors, who later made attempts to contact students and meet with them. Faculty participated in a discussion of intrusive advising approaches and agreed to utilize the approach to (a) initiatiive contact early in the semester, (b) generally
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discuss the areas of concern revealed in the student survey report, (c) identify one or two services (including tutoring, counseling, spiritual support), (d) maintain consistent contact throughout the year, and (d) document advising meetings. Several faculty reported meeting with the majority of the at-risk students and helping connect them to appropriate services. However, faculty indicated that some students were not responsive to advisor requests for meetings, which some faculty attributed to conflicting schedules between students and advisors.

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In the spring 2004, six focus group discussions were held to better understand students’ perceptions about their college experiences. Four discussions were held during regularly scheduled class times, and two were held in the student lounge during the noon hour. The discussions had 60 students participating, with individual discussions ranging in size from 4 to 15 students (average focus group size was 10). Four undergraduate students were trained to facilitate the focus group discussions. The protocol asked students to comment on the reasons they decided to attend the college, the challenges they expected upon entering, their experiences with faculty, perceptions of student behavior, and the availability/quality of available resources. Each focus group began with a rather informal greeting by the facilitator and the facilitator’s assistant. The role of the assistant was to take copious notes during the meeting and to monitor the protocol to ensure that the facilitator adequately covered all questions. The facilitator followed the guidelines developed by Claesson and Brice (1989): (a) the same issue or questions were covered in all the focus groups; (b) the order of the questions were fitted to the individual focus group; (c) individual perspectives and experiences were allowed to emerge; and (d) what participants considered important issues was not presupposed. Spontaneous, context-based, follow-up questions to probe, clarify, and interpret information were used throughout. Near the end of the discussion, the facilitator asked the assistant to summarize the major themes that emerged in the focus group. Participants were provided an opportunity to confirm, clarify, and modify the major themes during the summary report.

Following each session, the student facilitator transcribed the focus group discussions verbatim. The principal investigator highlighted comments and quotes that exemplified the themes described by the participants. Information obtained from the text was systematically transformed into naturally occurring units of information
using thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These units of information were then placed into categories based on similar content and meaning using the constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This method consists of the simultaneous coding and analysis of data in order to make comparisons in and between categories and to look for similarities, differences, and consistency of meaning. The resulting categories served to integrate themes as they emerged from the data.

RESULTS

Faculty Survey

In general, the faculty survey revealed that faculty members indicated each area presented to be a moderate problem with one exception. Faculty indicated that student involvement was a minor problem ($M = 1.90$). They rated student academic preparation to be slightly more than a moderate problem ($M = 3.37$). Standard deviations ranged from .79 to 1.02, indicating variability in faculty responses. A discrepancy existed between the faculty's perceptions about the amount of time students should spend preparing for class and their estimate about how much time students actually spent preparing for class. Faculty expected students to study 4.43 hours/week and estimated that their actual time spent studying reflected less than 2 hours.

The open-ended questions regarding policies, communication of policies, and evidence of students' understanding of the various expectations were analyzed for patterns across respondents. Thirteen of the 16 respondents, 13 described a clear policy or expectation of attendance at all class sessions. Faculty placed academic consequences on students' grades following a specified number of absences. In clinical situations, faculty indicated that all work/time must be made up at some point in the semester. The mechanism for communicating this policy varied from appearing in the syllabus to verbally discussing it with the class as a whole. The majority of faculty specifically made reference to confronting students with a "warning notice" if the student was near or had exceeded the number of allowed absences. In terms of providing evidence of an explicit stated policy, one faculty member indicated, "I can't describe any evidence because the behavior doesn't support their understanding of policy." Faculty reported few policies on punctuality. Four faculty members indicated that lateness was equated with an absence or referred to the absence policy. The communication of the policy was largely situational in response to frequent lateness. Behavior expectations were more
theoretical and revolved around the issue of respect for each other. Less overt communication of expectations was reported, and few faculty members pointed to specific language or a policy guiding classroom behavior. Some referred loosely to classroom discussion or program orientation as a source for students receiving information about behavior expectations.

**Student Survey**

Results from the student survey indicate that students expected to be highly engaged in their college experience. Overall, their academic motivation reflected high levels of learning goal orientation and self-regulation. The subscale average on performance goal orientation of 2.85 suggests that, in general, students reported average levels of external motivation. Students were not especially receptive to the services offered, which was the lowest average subscale score. The extent to which out-of-school factors were a problem or concern hovered around the midpoint of the scale (see Table 1).

The results of multiple regression analysis showed that 21% of the variance in spring 2004 GPA are accounted for by the subscales \( F(6, 303) = 11.85; p < .001 \). Self-regulation was the strongest predictor of GPA (\( \beta = .052; t = 3.21; p = .001 \)). Higher scores on the self-regulation subscale were also positively associated with higher spring GPAs. Learning goal orientation was positively, but not significantly, related to GPA. Receptivity to services was a negative predictor of GPA. In other words, students who expected to use services provided by the college had lower GPA’s than students less inclined to receive assistance, controlling for all other variables in the model. Performance goal orientation was also a significant negative predictor of achievement. The GPAs of first-year (2.89) and second-year students (2.86) were not significantly different, controlling for all variables in the model (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale averages</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance goal</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goal</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptivity</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Linear regression equation predicting cumulative GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t test</th>
<th>lower bound</th>
<th>Upper bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.62***</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance goal</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>−2.89**</td>
<td>−.04</td>
<td>−.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goal</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>−.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>3.21***</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>−1.19</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptivity</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>−5.63***</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>−.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic standing</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>−.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 3 shows the relationships between the subscales. Self-regulation scores were positively correlated with learning goal orientation and negatively correlated with performance goal orientation. Self-regulation was also positively related to engagement and receptivity to services. Performance goal orientation was related to high levels of concern about being successful in college.

Logistic regression analyses indicated that the survey was a viable predictor of attrition at the college. Students with higher scores on the engagement and receptivity subscales were more likely to be retained than their peers with lower scores on these subscales. The results of independent t tests show that students who were identified as at-risk of academic problems were significantly less likely to be retained and had lower cumulative GPA’s than their peers who were not identified (see Table 4).

The last section of the survey asked students to rank their greatest concerns from a list of nine Likert-type items dealing with potential concerns. Over 30% of respondents indicated that “meeting the academic

Table 3. Correlations among subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance goal</th>
<th>Learning goal</th>
<th>Self-regulation</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Receptivity</th>
<th>Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance goal</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goal</td>
<td>−.11*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>−.12*</td>
<td>.64***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptivity</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>.30***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
Table 4. GPA and retention of students at-risk and students not identified as at-risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Spring 2004 cumulative GPA</th>
<th>Retention percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at-risk</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>2.90*</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

demands of college" was their greatest concern. Slightly less respondents rated "balancing family responsibilities and schoolwork" as their greatest concern. Other concerns receiving high ratings included "paying tuition," and "balancing work responsibilities with schoolwork."

Attendance Logs

Faculty reported relatively infrequent behavior problems in classes, with many not reporting any problems over the course of a month. In terms of punctuality, on average, six students came to class late per month, ranging from a high of 21 to several faculty who reported that students never came to class late in either month. An index of class attendance was created by multiplying enrollment by class sessions per month and dividing by the reported absenteeism. This index revealed an overall absenteeism rate of 15% (ranging from a high of 50% to a low of 1%) in the months of October and slightly less in September. Further examination revealed that higher enrollment was associated with higher absenteeism ($F(59, 2) = 5.1, p = .028$), controlling for the session that a class was given (day, evening, or weekend). There were no statistically significant mean differences in absenteeism based on session, but real differences by time (16.5% day, 13.5% evening, and 9% weekend) could be further verified with a larger sample of weekend classes.

Student Focus Groups

The results of the focus groups are summarized around the major open-ended questions: reasons for attending, expectations of challenges to success, perceptions of faculty/advisors, perceptions of student behavior, and resources available at the college. Students reported several reasons for attending the college including location, specific program offered, the presence of a nontraditional population, flexible scheduling, and the school's reputation as obtained from friends and family. These reasons were all secondary to the general
The majority of participants reported that faculty and faculty advisors were genuinely interested in student learning, used multiple instructional strategies, and were available to students when they needed them. Positive comments about teaching and advising included faculty energy level, expertise in their area of study, and a general willingness to work with individual students. Students cited that timely response to e-mail and being available during office hours as evidence that faculty cared about their students. Additionally, students talked favorably about classes and faculty that incorporated group discussions and hands-on learning. While a few students reported that some classes rely exclusively on lecture, the majority of participants described a balance of direct instruction with group discussion and some constructivist teaching strategies.

When describing the quality of instruction, some students cited incidents that reflected a level of dissatisfaction with individual classes or faculty. The concerns were grouped around the issues of course difficulty and students feeling that faculty in these courses were not responsive to student inquiries and problems in the course. Four students reported that they were failing a course and were not aware of their standing and/or were not given an opportunity to make up work in order to pass a class. Although these students recognized that college is less flexible around this scenario than their high school experience, they believed that faculty members were not willing to assist them when unforeseen circumstances arose.

There was little uniformity around suggestions for improving the quality of teaching and learning at the college. Ideas ranged from having a more functional cafeteria to keeping the bookstore and library open longer. The rationale for the cafeteria was two-fold. Students desire additional space to congregate for studying and social interaction. Additionally, students wanted access to nutritional food since they are running from work to school or staying at school for extended periods of time. Others mentioned the need for more social activities to cater to “younger students” who want more of a college experience.

**DISCUSSION**

Each component of the retention initiative is independently informative. However combining and interpreting results collectively reveals a comprehensive picture of the early experiences for traditional and nontraditional students. The results of this research directly relate to college in terms of planning retention strategies and meeting the specific needs of its nontraditional student population. Additionally,
theme (where a majority for the group agreed) that the relatively small environment was a leading factor for choosing the school. Students elaborated that small classes, knowing their professors, and "not feeling like a number" contributed their sense that faculty and staff would be responsive to their individual needs, and they would not get "lost."

The greatest challenges consisted of balancing work/family and school work and being able to keep up with school work. Bowl (2001) called this situation time poverty, a common concern for non-traditional students. Much of the concern revolved around having to miss class or not having enough time to study because of the demands placed on the students' time. Some indicated that while the flexible schedule of classes helped students physically get to class, the expectation of studying and "finding time to sleep" was overwhelming. A related theme of "how to study" also emerged in the groups. Some spoke of being out of the classroom for several decades, and even the students directly entering college after high school recognized that the amount of work and its rigor presented challenges.

Questions about student behavior required students to comment on the extent to which attendance and lateness were problems in college. Additionally, we asked students to suggest ways that faculty could effectively address these issues. Students consistently stated that attending class was an important condition for academic success. Although they indicated that some of their peers missed classes, they did not perceive attendance to be a salient problem. They reasoned that "students pay for school," so it is their decision whether or not to attend. This point was mentioned several times around the policies instituted by faculty. Some felt that penalizing students for absences was not fair, since their multiple responsibilities sometimes prevented students from attending class sessions. Students identified their peers' lateness as a community or learner problem. Participants indicated that students often come to class late and disrupted the flow of class. However, the intensity or cause of the disruption was often aimed at the faculty members' way of addressing the students' lateness rather than the toward the late student. Students lamented faculty who embarrassed students or took additional time from the disruption to hand back materials to the student coming in late. Similar to the attendance situation, students preferred not to have consequences applied to their grade for lateness. Proposed solutions were mainly personal warnings or discussions after class rather than a blanket policy that did not take into account individual circumstances. Finally, students talked about wanting to attend classes where learning was informative and interesting.
the process and products of the inquiry can be adopted at other 2-year colleges, as colleges continue to address the concerns about low retention rates and low levels of student satisfaction with their 2-year college experience.

A cursory view of the challenges for nontraditional students reveals that many of the students' concerns appear to be outside the purview of services that are provided. Issues of academic preparation, poverty, child-care, and transportation present obstacles for students and the college. However, data from the current study show that students are keenly aware of their individual challenges and can benefit from early, intrusive advising by using the resources that are currently in place (Kim, 2002).

The student survey results generally followed similar patterns discovered in other studies of the academic motivation. Higher levels of learning goal orientation and self-regulation were associated with higher levels of academic achievement (VanZile-Tamsen & Livingston, 1999; Wolters, 1998). One rather surprising finding was that receptivity to services was negatively related to achievement. The finding is inconsistent with previous studies that demonstrate student willingness to receive help is a strong predictor of academic success (Smith, 2005, Smith, Dai, & Szego, in press). The finding may be attributed to the relatively low scores on the subscale overall. It is possible that students reported realistic expectations that they do not have the time to devote to getting extra-help, visiting advisors more than once per semester, attending spiritual events, and other services offered by the college. This explanation is supported by the most frequently cited concern, that of "time poverty" (Bowl, 2001). Students felt that there was not enough room in their schedules to add anything beyond studying independently, taking care of the family, and work responsibilities. This finding was supported in the student focus group discussions.

Students at the college level were genuinely pleased with their early college experiences and described faculty as being supportive of their learning. While faculty anecdotally identified student behavior as a problem, analysis of the faculty survey did not completely support the assumptions. Faculty rated most issues as a moderate problem, but students did not see the problems in the same way. At this point, these data do not warrant a uniform policy on either absences or lateness. Rather, they suggest that faculty need to be clear, consistent, and fair when developing and articulating their individual policies. The results do call for some discussion about setting attendance benchmarks or expectations. The findings show that approximately 15% of students are missing from each class in a given month.
Faculty could discuss if that is an acceptable percentage and think about ways to improve that individually and collectively. Student lateness and behavior appeared to be less of a problem in terms of quantity, but the level of disruption reported by students participating in the focus groups warrants a similar approach to the absenteeism issue. Although "classroom behavior" was rarely cited as an issue, it is likely tied to individual level of tolerance and a lack of clarity on what type of classroom behavior constitutes a problem.

In response to the findings, faculty identified some way to address the problem. First, the learning center could offer time management workshops, and faculty members could address the issue at the beginning of the semester in their respective classes. Second, advisors can continue to study the tenets of intrusive advising and reach out to students who present a high level risk for academic problems. Faculty hope to devote time to share advising philosophies and intervention strategies within and across disciplines during faculty meetings/training. Third, faculty/staff could help organize student support/study groups that specifically address issues of stress, time management, and promoting a sense of community at the college.

LIMITATIONS

Interpretation of the results of this comprehensive study must take into consideration the limitations. The inquiry was first and foremost designed as a single-institution initiative to help the college understand its students and to help increase retention at the college. The college is a 2-year private college, but functions similarly to many public community colleges. Additionally, the sample was not randomly selected; approximately half the sample was majoring in nursing, and almost 90% were female. For these reasons, the results are not generalizable. Rather, the process of using data to examine retention issues is transferable to similar 2-year colleges that serve large numbers of nontraditional students.

A second limitation has to do with the multiple data collection methods. The study incorporated multiple methods including attendance logs and a faculty survey developed specifically for the study. Therefore, there were no prior psychometric properties indicating reliability of the instruments. It is possible that faculty followed different procedures for compiling attendance, tardy, behavior (e.g., some directly after the class, while others at the end of each week) that could bias the results of the logs. But given that faculty generated the areas of concern and volunteered to collect the data, there is a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the logs.
Finally, faculty reported differing levels of intrusive advising with students identified as at-risk. The school has an electronic advisor-advisee contact system that allows advisors to document advising contact and meetings with students. Not all faculty members were comfortable with the new technology; therefore, reviewing the contacts could not serve as an indicator of quantity or quality of advisor-advisee contact. Faculty had difficulty contacting students (e.g., wrong phone number or not responding to campus e-mail), or they did not have enough time to call them at least once per month as the minimum outreach recommended. The faculty members need additional training around the principles of intrusive advising and the opportunity to share their common concerns with the challenges associated with the approach. Faculty also cited a lack of knowledge about whether or not students followed through on referrals to the learning center, counseling services, or financial aid office. Further coordination of referrals and follow-up documentation are necessary to close this gap in communication.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

The process of faculty and staff using data to inform advisor practice is noteworthy. Future research on nontraditional students’ transition and experiences in college are needed. The high school to college transition literature tends to focus on 4-year residential colleges. Since some students are only in the college for two years, the transition can be considered a 2-year process. Like 4-year schools, community colleges need to (a) take advantage of the opportunities afforded by prematriculation data including achievement and affective variables, and (b) offer transitional programming such as orientation programs and first-year seminars to assist students with the transition to college.

Future inquiry about nontraditional student transition could follow a quasieperimental design similar to the Jeschke et al. (2001) study with psychology majors. Given the time commitment necessary for effective intrusive advising, students identified as at-risk can be matched to either an experimental or control group to assess the impact of the advisor intervention on achievement. Ethical considerations about “withholding” interventions are alleviated somewhat as the control group receives the same information and opportunities to college services as all students at the school. The only difference is that the experimental group receives intrusive advising practices that are specifically administered by a small cadre of faculty advisors. This would require a careful documentation of advisor-advisee
interaction—an aspect of the current initiative that was attempted but not formalized.

In terms of practice, the processes and products of the initiative demonstrate that faculty and staff at 2-year colleges can collaborate to identify and intervene with students at-risk for developing academic challenges (Mason, 1998). The transition to college can be a challenging experience for all students regardless of age or experience. The study suggests that additional resources and supports are necessary so that all college configurations have the opportunity to invest in professional development around academic advising and student support services (Derby & Smith, 2004). Faculty advisors play an important role in the transition to college for nontraditional students, and both could benefit greatly from additional training in developmental and intrusive advising approaches.

Finally, the retention initiative was based on a collaborative model in which faculty, staff from institutional research, and a researcher worked together to collect and analyze data, develop interventions, and reflect on the findings to improve practice (Smith et al., in press). The model enabled faculty advisors to have a sense of ownership of the research and practice. Unlike, 4-year schools, many 2-year institutions are just beginning to staff offices of institutional research and use data to inform decision-making. To share strategies and learn from one another, 4-year colleges can partner with their feeder 2-year colleges and community colleges. Articulation agreements must go beyond students transferring to and from colleges and toward an arena of collaboration and data-sharing. True collaboration can be mutually beneficial to the institutions, students, and faculty at both institutions.

REFERENCES


Using Data to Inform Decisions


