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An Evaluation of Student Support Services at Southeastern Louisiana University.

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Mr. Nathaniel and Mrs. Arlena Maye Showers, and my sister, Barbara A. Showers. These three have been the Wind Beneath My Wings.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God Be The Glory

My sincere and heartfelt thanks belong to the many people who have been influential in my life and who helped to make this dissertation a reality. My major professor, Dr. Eugene Kennedy has truly refined the concepts of challenge, patience, persistence and commitment to a precise science. Eugene, your willingness to share your knowledge and skills, to offer assistance in various ways, and most of all, your belief that I could and would, complete this project have unquestionably supplied me with the motivation, reassurance, and fortitude I needed to persevere. Thank You. I offer a special thanks to my committee members, Dr. Dan Fogel, Dr. William (Bud) Davis, Dr. Barbara Furhmann and Dr. Richard Fossey.

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Many friends and colleagues have also contributed their encouragement, joy, support and expertise during the past few years. Space prohibits me from doing more than simply listing their names: Ms. Venola Carter, Ms. Margie Self, Ms. Josephine Rattler, Dr. Billie Theriot, Dr. Shannon Kast and Mr. Ravi Kallianpur. To Dean Barbara Allen and President Sally Clausen, your support of my endeavors is deeply appreciated thanks. Finally, I would like to recognize the time and efforts of the students, faculty and administrators at the university.

A special, special appreciation to my husband, Pastor Samuel Brown for his support of all my endeavors. Thank you for allowing me to be me.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Student Support Services (SSS) at Southeastern Louisiana University as these services relate to grade point averages and retention rates. Four groups of 45 students were selected for the study. Forty-five SSS freshmen participants were matched on their at risk classification with 45 non-SSS participants. Forty-five SSS sophomores and 45 non-SSS contemporary sophomores were also matched according to the at risk classification. First generation and low income students who scored 18 and below on the ACT, and earned a high school grade point average of 3.0 or less constitute the at risk classification in this study. Increased grade point average was defined as a 2.0 or greater on a 4.0 scale. Freshmen retention was defined as entering freshmen who earned 24 semester hours at the end of the 1995-96 academic year. Sophomore retention was defined as second year students who earned 48 semester hours at the end of the 1995-96 academic year. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative research procedures suggest that the comprehensive services (academic, career and financial aid counseling, workshops and tutoring) contributed to increased grade point averages and retention rates.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive array of services provided by SLU's Student Support Services Program (SSS) as these services relate to the grade-point averages and retention rates of high-risk students. Low retention rates and grade-point averages are the highest and occur with the greatest frequency among first-generation and low-income students. College low retention and low grade point averages are a major concern because of the historically low status of Louisiana's ranking in education as well as the state's inability to generate a strong economy. Furthermore, the findings of research suggest a direct link between the educational levels of a state's citizens and its economy. Both college and state officials are concerned about increasing these rates because of the future economic and policy implications for Louisiana (John Breaux, 1997).

Demographics Regarding Occupational Needs Relevant to Retention Rates in Higher Education

Education is considered to be vital to the quality of life, personal earnings, and the economic well being of the nation. The Occupational Outlook Quarterly (1991, p. 24) reported:

Workers with the most education and training will have the best opportunities for obtaining high-paying jobs in growing occupations because of the changing occupational composition of the work force and the changing structure of work within occupations. Although the projection indicates that jobs will be available for those without training beyond high school, prospects for high-paying jobs will increasingly be better for those having post-secondary education and training. An important factor is that the high-paying jobs for workers without education beyond high school in our nation's
manufacturing establishments are declining in number for a combination of reasons, including technological change and changing business practices.

Two very important factors are revealed in the above statement. First, in general, the more formal education one has, the more he or she earns. Second, the more education one has, the less likely he or she will become unemployed. Although many students are provided with this information concerning the relationship among education, income, and employment, it apparently is not serving as a sufficient incentive for students to remain in institutions of higher learning through graduation. The reality is that students are leaving college for a variety of reasons that include both academic and non-academic concerns.

Various academic and non-academic factors play a cultural role in low grade point averages and retention rates. Academic and non-academic factors are associated with low grade-point averages and low retention rates. Academically, it appears that all students do not receive equal preparation in elementary and secondary schools. More affluent schools have more resources and provide a wider range of experiences. According to Jones and Watson (1990, pp. 56 - 61), instructional approaches used by teachers of high-risk students may be different from instructional approaches used for non-high-risk students. Thus, non-academic factors associated with retention may be generated by both teachers and students. For example, teachers’ negative attitudes about high-risk students affect student’s self-esteem. As a result, many high-risk students develop low self-esteem (a self-fulfilling prophecy) and begin to cooperate with systemic forces that result in dropping out of the university. In addition to these academic and non-academic influences, financial aid problems or lack of financial assistance and information regarding grants, scholarships, and
loans have also been known to be barriers in higher education (Sayre, 1980). Lack of
counseling regarding career opportunities and personal concerns also contribute to low
grade-point averages and retention rates (Carroll, 1988).

According to Jones and Watson (1990, pp. 62-63), low retention rate is a major
problem for American colleges and universities, and efforts to retain students are stymied
and made complex because an increasing number of enrollees fit the socio-economic and
demographic profile of “high-risk” students. This is a critical issue for the nation as a whole
because the increasing enrollment of high-risk students, defined as first-generation and low-
income individuals, is expected to continue into the next century.

Therefore, a role for the federal government in education, economic development,
and the security of the nation’s future has been created. Congress has taken the initiative to
help high-risk students participate more fully in the economic and social life of America.
Federal intervention in education began as early as the 1800's and continues today as the
country nears the twenty-first century. The need for congressional assistance originated as
the profile of American students changed from the “elite” to the “masses” and as the
economic and social needs of the nation have changed.

Changes in American Higher Education

According to Boyer (1990, p. 3), American higher education has moved through
three overlapping phases. Initially, higher education was designed for the “elite” and was
student focused. Later, the focus of higher education centered around provision of services
and building of a nation, and even more recently, the focus of education has shifted to
practical preparation for a career.

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The early colonial college with its strong British roots was essentially student focused. The emphasis in colonial education was on building character and preparing new generations for civic and religious leadership. Students were entrusted to tutors, who were responsible for their intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. Faculty were educational mentors in the classroom and responsible for the overall well-being of students. This tradition, one that affirmed the centrality of teaching, persisted well into the nineteenth century.

Educational change was inevitable due to the growth and needs of the nation. During the early 1800's, the focus of education changed from the shaping of young lives to the building of a nation, and all were touched by the American faith in tomorrow and in the capacity of Americans to achieve a better world (Rudolph, 1962). Both Yale and Harvard were pioneers in this area. Changes in higher education were enhanced by the Morill Act of 1862, later call the Land Grant College Act. The Morill Act legislation gave federal land to each state, with proceeds from the sale of the land to support both education in the liberal arts and training in skills that ultimately would serve as the foundation for the emerging agricultural and mechanical revolution. The idea of education as a democratic function was enhanced by the Hatch Act of 1887 that provided federal funds to universities—which sponsored agricultural experimental stations that brought learning to the farmer.

Higher education in America, once devoted primarily to the intellectual and moral development of students, added services as a mission. The goal was not only to serve society but also reshape it. President Jordan of Stanford University declared that the entire university movement in the twentieth century is toward reality and practicality (Veysey,
1965, p. 61). Later, Harvard President Charles Elliot stated that “at the bottom of the American institutions of higher education are citizens filled with the modern democratic spirit of serviceableness” (Eddy, 1957, p. 55). Both teachers and students were moved by the desire to serve the democratic community.

Near the end of the Great Depression and the onset of World War II, colleges and universities began to experience another social transformation—the revolution of rising expectations (Boyer, 1990, p. 11). The Commission on Higher Education appointed by President Harry S. Truman redefined the mission of higher education. This panel concluded that America’s colleges and universities should no longer “be merely the instrument for providing for the intellectual elite”. Instead, the report stated, higher education must become “the means by which every citizen, youth and adult is enabled and encouraged to carry his education, formal and informal, as far as his innate capacities permit” (Cremin, 1988). As a result of this vision, America moved from an elite to a mass system of higher education. New colleges were built and higher education, once viewed as a privilege, was now accepted as a right. The tradition of who should go to college changed. According to Lucas (1996, pp. 17-18), major contrasts between America’s collegiate population before the midpoint of the twentieth century and at its end include those listed below.

1. Pre-war undergraduate students were predominantly male (about 60 percent); today the typical collegian is more likely to be female (over 55 percent).

2. Students attending college toward the close of the Depression years and into the 1940's were likely to be drawn from the upper third of their high school graduating classes.
Similar high standing is less likely to characterize an ever-expanding portion of today’s college students.

3. Fifty years ago the modal age of undergraduates fell between eighteen and twenty-one. An increasing number of today’s baccalaureate candidates are likely to be in their mid-twenties or slightly older.

4. The overwhelming majority of students going to college in the pre-war years were single, attended school full-time, lived on a residential campus, and pursued a liberal arts degree. Most completed degrees within four years. Contemporary college students, on the other hand, are more apt to divide their time between working and attending school part time, commuting to campus, and requiring more than the usual four years to finish their degrees. Many of the contemporary college students are married.

With the changes in the mission of colleges and universities and the provision of equal access for American citizens, students from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and classes began to enroll in institutions of higher learning. Large numbers of disadvantaged (first-generation and low-income) students flooded college campuses during the late 1950’s and 1960’s. Financial aid programs were authorized by the federal government to accommodate and make provisions for disadvantaged students to participate more fully in their efforts to acquire a college degree.

Congress also recognized that disadvantaged students faced other unique problems that decreased their probability of pursuing and succeeding in post secondary institutions. Therefore, the Higher Education Act of 1965 authorized programs to provide information,
counseling, encouragement, and other services to help equalize college opportunities for the disadvantaged (Phillips, 1985).

**Education in Louisiana**

Louisiana's educational system has traditionally received less than adequate financial support. As a result, the history of higher education in Louisiana does not reflect a concerted effort toward educational provision for the general population. According to O'Neill, et al. (1984, p. 269), Louisiana officials were traditionally short-sighted regarding educational needs for the state's citizens. Consequently, the state continues to rank at or near the bottom of the other forty-nine states in literacy. Louisiana's low educational attainment rate was a leading indicator that before the Huey Long Era, the state government was unresponsive to the needs of the general public. Increasing importance on the value of education and federal legislation caused Louisiana's leaders to begin to make provisions for educational access.

Although reasons may vary to explain the low educational achievement level of the general population in Louisiana, only two will be discussed in this study. The first reason relates to the public primary and secondary schools. The second reason for low educational achievement relates to the poor economic condition of Louisiana that has existed for decades.

Prior to 1860 and continuing through the early part of the twentieth century, public educational efforts in Louisiana were sporadic (Gremillion, et al., 1969, pp. 4-14). Public schools suffered from lack of administrative leadership, and as a result were handicapped well into the present era. In addition, white parents were unwilling for their children to attend public schools during the Reconstruction Period. Therefore, during the period
between 1877 and 1900, sentiment for public schools had to be built from the bottom up (p. 12).

For decades Louisiana's educational system remained virtually paralyzed. From 1936-1950, one-fifth of the adult population had received no schooling whatsoever, and over half of the remainder had reached only the fourth grade level (Gremillion, et al., pp. 18-27). As late as 1970, the state ranked forty-ninth out of fifty in overall educational attainment of its citizens. The great educational awakening in Louisiana began after WWII (p. 14). Ever-increasing numbers of students attended public schools as they searched for the tools to establish a better life and to relieve themselves from their levels of poverty. Educational leadership at both the state and local levels appeared stronger. Students began to complete school at the secondary level. The next step for the better life was institutions of higher learning.

After World War II, Louisiana students began to attend both primary and secondary schools in greater numbers. Yet, the state was slow in making progress in the educational attainment levels of its citizens. As recently as the 1993-1994 academic year, a continued decline was noted in the enrollment and performance of students in Louisiana when based on national tests. Moreover, each year thousands of young people graduate from Louisiana's high schools unable to read beyond the sixth grade level (Head, Shipp, & Gremillion, p. 371).

Public institutions of higher education in the state with open-door policies faced other problems. Low levels of educational attainment at the secondary level placed burdens on the state's university system. Remedial training and developmental courses in reading,
mathematics and English became vital components of Louisiana's higher education offerings.

The second reason for low educational achievement in Louisiana relates to the economic conditions of state. Traditionally, with the exception of some of the major cities, Louisiana's per capital income has continuously been low. In addition, major industries have tended to establish their business in other states, relegating Louisiana residents to low-paying jobs, and low socio-economic statuses. The impact on public colleges and universities is noted in their small operating budgets (Head, Shipp, & Gremillion, 1969, p. 270).

As the 1960's drew to a close, the number of students enrolled in colleges and universities increased dramatically. In 1970, Louisiana's colleges and universities enrolled twice as many students as in 1960 (National Longitudinal Study, 1994, pp. 23-24). As college education became more available and affordable to the majority population, the traditional university structure declined. A large number of disadvantaged students began to enroll in institutions of higher education. A college degree became the goal of the average citizen.

Two reasons have been given for the low college attainment levels of the citizens of Louisiana. First, public primary and secondary schools have ranked forty-ninth out of fifty in the United States (National Education Association, 1995, pp. 1-4). Many students who complete high schools have less than adequate reading skills, problem solving skills, and mathematics abilities. Second, the socio-economic condition of Louisiana contributed to a reduced interest in education. As a result, a large number of students who attend colleges
and universities in the state have less than adequate post-secondary training, and often experience financial difficulty. These factors combine to influence low grade point averages and retention rates.

**Louisiana Demographics**

Higher learning affects both the individual and society. Individually, citizens are afforded more career options and an enhanced quality of life. Furthermore, society benefits from a well-informed citizenry and more highly skilled workers. According to Lucas (1996, p. 95), it is essential that as many people as possible be encouraged to extend their education beyond high school. In a simpler, less demanding era, a secondary education sufficed for the needs of most people. However, a secondary education is rarely sufficient in the latter part of the twentieth century. A greater awareness and deeper understanding of social, political and economic concerns are needed for meaningful and effective participation as the country nears the twenty-first century.

The future economic well-being of Louisiana may be affected by the low number of individuals who earn bachelor degrees. The Southern Regional Education Board reported that Southern states, including Louisiana, must improve on the educational attainment of their citizens. Otherwise, many new jobs being created will go elsewhere (Yount, 1989). According to a report from the Louisiana Department of Labor (1996, p. 27) on observations of educational trends and projections of qualifications of the future labor market, there is a general assumption:

... Louisiana won't be able to compete for jobs in the year 2000 if its residents don't receive more education. By the turn of the century, an even greater number of jobs could be created in Louisiana, most of which would require more education and a
higher level of skills. But if there are not enough qualified people to fill them, many of these jobs may go elsewhere. If trends continue, only 51 percent of Louisiana residents will have completed high school or have attended an institution of higher education by the year 2000, compared with the regional rate of 79 percent and the national rate of 87 percent.

A comparison of educational attainment levels for both Louisiana and the nation is noted below. These latest statistics from the Digest of Education Statistics (1996) reveal why Louisiana’s residents will need to work even harder to increase higher education opportunities in Louisiana.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Louisiana’s Attainment Level</th>
<th>National Attainment Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th grade or less</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the people of Louisiana are to be competitive in the labor market, and if Louisiana is to create a sound economic future, the state will need to increase the higher education completion rate so that it is on par with or above the national rate. The differences between Louisiana and the national educational attainment levels are evident of the need for a better educated populous for the state.

**High-risk Students at Southeastern Louisiana University**

A demographic profile of students who attend SLU, compiled with information from the Louisiana Department of Education (1994 - 95, pp. 1-5). SLU’s Office of Institutional

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Research (1996, Fall), and SLU's Office of Financial Aid (1995-96) reveals that a large percentage (86 percent) of all entering freshmen for Fall 1995 (previous semesters' percentages were at or above 87 percent) were considered high-risk due to their first-generation and their low-income status. For the purpose of this study, high-risk students are those classified as first-generation and students from low-income families. When neither of a student's parents has earned a bachelor's degree, that student is considered a first-generation student. Low-income students are those whose family incomes do not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level. Senator John Breaux (1997) reports that an estimated 89.5 percent of the households in Louisiana have adults residing therein who have not earned a bachelors degree.

These first-generation college students are also at a considerable risk for dropping out of college. The major premise is that without a college graduate role model in the home, students will not receive the parental encouragement and support necessary to persevere in completion of a four-year degree program. Another premise is that first-generation students are often from families and communities whose behavior and values are different from those of the college community and from other second- or third-generation college students.

In addition to the majority of SLU students being classified as first-generation, many are also classified as low-income. This fact is due to economic conditions of the State of Louisiana and the fourteen major feeder parishes to Southeastern Louisiana University. Eighty-two percent of the University's students come from six "feeder" parishes. In fact, St. Helena Parish, one of the feeder parishes to SLU, has the highest poverty rate in Louisiana. According to statistics from the Louisiana Department of Labor (1996) and the percentage...
of SLU students who receive Pell Grants, Perkins Loans and SEOG Grants (SLU Office of Financial Aid, 1995-96), over 70 percent of the students at this university are considered low-income.

According to Mitchem (1997), an individual from a family with an income under $22,000 has only an 8 percent chance of graduating from college by the time he is twenty-four, while an individual from an upper-income family (over $67,000) has a 79 percent chance of earning a baccalaureate degree by this time. Students from lower socio-economic status (SES) groups exhibit higher rates of dropouts than do students from higher SES groups even when intelligence has been taken into account (Sewell & Shah, 1967). An article in SLU’s Lion’s Roar (1996) reported that students from low-income families are 10 times less likely to obtain college degrees than are those from upper-income families. These statistics are dramatically worse than fifteen years ago, when lower income students were only four times less likely to complete a degree.

Several reasons have been offered to explain the low grade-point averages (2.0 or less on a 4.0 scale) and retention rates of first-generation and low-income students at SLU. One of the reasons includes changes in federal assistance and patterns of financing higher education. Somers (1996) noted that declines in college participation of high-risk students correlated with the growth of student loans at the expense of grants. Schwartz (1985) stated that high-risk students seem less willing to go into debt to finance a college education. In another study, St. John, Boyce, and Norris (1987) established that student aid had a positive influence on students’ decisions to attend and remain in college.
Another explanation for high-risk students' low retention rates and low grade-point averages is the influence of inadequate academic preparation for college. According to Tinto (1993a, p. 84), the overall persistence rates differ between high-risk students and other students because of the quality of their academic preparedness that may, in turn, result from differences in socio-economic backgrounds. Tinto (p.96) further contended that ability differences arise from prior educational experience at the elementary and secondary educational levels which tend to favor the educational achievement of students who are not considered high-risk.

The third explanation is that lack of adjustment to the collegiate environment may lower the quality of college experiences for high-risk students at SLU. According to Tinto (1993b, p. 106), lack of integration into the college social system will lead to low commitment and increase the probability that the student will decide to leave college. Jones and Watson (1990, pp.34 - 35) stated that adjustment problems are the result of inadequate college preparation skills, lack of support services, and financial problems, as well as the nature of interpersonal relationships with faculty and academic staff. In addition, Kuh and Whitt (1988, pp. 53 - 65) noted that the size of the institution, aspirations toward a college degree, academic preparation for college, study habits, satisfaction with peers, and academic integration within the institution were factors that affected college academic performance.

In a previous study, Tinto (1975) stated that background characteristics, SES, high school experience, community of residence and individual attributes such as sex, race, and ability, as well as expectational and motivational attributes, are considered important to students' collegiate success. Tracey and Sedlacek (1987) contended that non-cognitive
factors such as self-concept play a more critical role in shaping academic performance in college and persistence decisions than do cognitive factors such as academic ability and study habits. In other words, the higher the degree of integration of the individual into the college system, the greater will be his/her commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion. Students whose values and abilities integrate well with the institution's offerings find a sense of belonging, encouragement, and satisfaction, and are more likely to remain in college (Fralick, 1993).

As previously stated, a majority of the students enrolled at Southeastern Louisiana University meet the high-risk criteria. As a result, these students may be seen as major contributors to the low retention and graduation rates at the university. Therefore, efforts to increase grade-point averages and retention rates leading to increased graduation rates will favorably and economically impact SLU, Louisiana, and the nation.

Student Support Service Programs

Although tutoring has been a component at colleges and universities since 1936, tutoring alone has not proved successful in increasing grade point averages and retention rates (Boyer, 1990, pp. 4-6). It appears that understanding the need for more comprehensive programs led in 1965 to the initiation by the federal government of programs to assist underrepresented, first-generation and low-income high school and college students who had the potential to succeed in an institution of higher education. Three programs for the disadvantaged (disadvantaged is used interchangeably with high-risk), Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services (SSS) emerged under the Higher Education Act of 1965. These programs (collectively called TRIO) provided information, financial aid,
academic, career and personal counseling, tutorial assistance, and other support to low-income and first-generation youths and adults in order to improve their chances of college enrollment, retention and graduation (Phillips, 1985). Since 1992, TRIO programs were expanded to include Training Grants for TRIO staff, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and Education Opportunity Centers for adults. According to Mitchem (1997, p. 39), Federal TRIO Programs are the largest single effort to address social, cultural, informational, and academic barriers to college entrance and graduation. Similar programs are also filtering to elementary schools through Title I. Reading programs like Project Read, Reading Advocacy, and Reading for the 21st century are among programs that are targeted toward disadvantaged children.

As a result of low grade-point averages and retention rates, administrators, faculty and staff at institutions of higher education recognized the need to provide services designed to improve these rates. Requirements of SSS were implemented according to the needs of students. Therefore, one of the several requirements for SSS programs is that each enrolled student be provided with a comprehensive array of services, sufficient to meet the student’s full financial need. Other services provided by SSS programs include the following: supplemental instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics and other subjects necessary for academic success; personal counseling; exposure to cultural events; and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students. Career options exposure and experiences, as well as career counseling sessions, are also components of the array of services provided by SSS.
To delineate further, Student Support Services Programs (SSS) nationwide have been
designed to provide specific services according to students’ academic, career, financial aid,
and personal needs. For example, entering freshmen are administered an Individualized
Student Profile (ISP). Information from this profile is used to assess needs in the aforesaid
areas. Each student is required to sign a contract. This contract stipulates that the student
will attend two tutoring sessions a week, two workshops per semester, one cultural event per
semester and two counseling sessions per semester. Freshmen must attend two workshops
from the following areas: study skills workshops, time management, test anxiety and self-
esteen. Also, sophomores must attend two workshops from the following areas: self-esteem,
test anxiety, and career exploration. Carroll (1988) states that the role of counselor and scope
of counseling services during the freshman year is of primary importance in the retention of
underprepared college students.

The national format of the Student Support Services Program also includes the
dissemination of financial aid information and the provision of direct assistance to eligible
students in need of educational services. Somers (1995) stated that students’ decisions to
attend college respond positively to price cuts or increases in financial aid. Financial aid
assistance serves to remove barriers for low-income students and offer them opportunities
of access, choice, and persistence. However, a large number of high-risk students are
unaware of the many types of financial aid assistance because of the unavailability of
financial aid information in high school and also because of parents’ lack of knowledge of
financial aid concerns. Ferklar (1985) stated that there is a significant relationship between
college completion and the receiving of financial aid. Receipt of financial aid has the third
strongest direct effect on persistence after high school GPA and degree level goal.

According to Lucas (1996, p. 4), rising costs associated with pursuit of the degree and other economic considerations have had much to do with the attainment of a bachelor's degree. College tuition was noted to have risen faster than the rate of inflation with tuition increases routinely ranging from 7 to 15 percent or higher annually.

Despite proposed educational barriers, the question is whether or not democratic ideals should furnish the impetus for abandoning exclusionary measures in higher learning. Everyone should be afforded the right to demonstrate his or her potential to profit from the collegiate experience. Institutions should offer a genuine welcome to all students with the purpose of nurturing students and providing them with genuine opportunities to succeed.

Stated goals designed to provide a home base for its participants are the means by which SSS seeks to deliver services and assist students. The goals of Student Support Services programs are to (1.) increase college retention and graduation rates for eligible students, and (2.) foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of low-income and first-generation college students. In efforts to accomplish these goals, SSS staff often serves as advocates between students and faculty, and as liaisons in referring students to various resources, both on and off campus. The staff also provides students with emotional support and guidance in career, academic, financial aid and personal concerns.

SSS programs have produced undeniable results and changed the lives of countless numbers of disadvantaged students, some of whom have gone on to achieve their dreams of becoming doctors or lawyers, Rhodes Scholars or Members of Congress (TRIO Achievers Publication, 1995). These former SSS students show that students, bolstered by positive
reinforcement and financial assistance, can offer leadership and hard work into the next century. This is especially important when one considers that a highly technical work force will be the prerequisite for any country wishing to be a player in tough world markets.

Research has been conducted within the past two decades regarding the importance of various non-academic factors on the success of high-risk or disadvantaged college students. Although SSS has been an integral part of the SLU community for seventeen years, no research has been done to evaluate the success of the program by comparing high-risk students who receive the services with those who do not. This study is designed to assess the effectiveness of the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS as they relate to grade-point averages and retention rates.

Research Questions

The following four questions have been formulated for this study:

1. Are there statistically significant differences in the rates of retention of freshman students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible freshman students who attended an open learning lab only?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the rates of retention of sophomore students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible sophomore students who attended an open learning lab only?

3. Are there statistically significant differences in the grade-point averages of freshman students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible freshman students who attended an open learning lab only?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in the grade-point averages of sophomore students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible sophomore students who attended an open learning lab only?

**Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to provide information concerning the extent to which the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS contribute to increased grade-point averages and retention rates. Findings and conclusions drawn from the study validate the program's effectiveness, and these results may also: (1) provide empirical knowledge for expansion of SSS to a larger SLU student population; and (2) help to justify institutional and legislative support of SSS. This study was significant because of the need for SSS, or similar programs to be integrated in colleges and universities located across the nation. Currently, SSS programs only serve less than two percent of the entire number of national college students.

The belief exists by this researcher that a study of this type provides the necessary data to support the need for a similar program to be implemented that will serve a larger population of students. With nearly 86 percent of SLU's students classified as either first-generation or low-income and with an awareness of the low retention rate at the university, it is evident that a comprehensive array of services is needed if other high-risk students are to succeed. There is a need for the university either to contribute funds to Student Support Services or establish a learning resource skill center that will address the needs of all students. Through academic and non-academic enhancement and supportive measures (time
management, self-esteem, etc. workshops), this study can assist in providing the statistics and information to support the success of students who require these services.

Improvement of services provided by SSS was another significant area in this study. SSS programs across the nation have similar major objectives. These include the following two goals: (1) to increase the retention and graduation rate of first-generation and low-income students, and (2) to foster an institutional climate of acceptance supportive of this same student population. However, individual SSS structures and formats are different. A study of this type can contribute to the availability of information regarding comprehensive services to students. The role of knowledge acquired from this study can enhance and improve services provided to students that could result in increased retention and graduation rates.

Finally, this study was significant because of its contribution to the research of SSS and support for continued funding of SSS programs and because of its contribution to provide evidence for support of TRIO legislation. Currently, research regarding evaluations and assessments of SSS is very limited. As of 1996, only two studies had been documented and published noting the contribution and effectiveness of the program.

Therefore this study not only contributes to the previous research on methods that will increase and support programs for high-risk college students, but also to increase the awareness of college personnel and state and federal legislators in order to improve their commitment to these programs. Today TRIO serves fewer than 7 percent of those eligible for services (Mitchem, 1997, p. 7). Additional resources need to be directed toward increasing the number of eligible youth and adults served and increasing the effectiveness
of college access and retention services. A continued effort should be targeted to maintaining and increasing resources for TRIO programs. In addition, during the past decade, these programs have been scrutinized very closely for possible elimination. For example, during the 1995 budget hearings, President Clinton and Congress were engaged in a continuous debate concerning the reduction of the federal budget. Education was one of the areas that would have been most deeply affected by these proposed cuts. Closer to home, the TRIO programs of higher education (inclusive of Student Support Services) were slated for total annihilation (463 million) in the proposed budget. An "eleventh hour" decision prevented the proposed cuts for 1996-1997 (TRIO Action Alert, 1995).

These budget cuts would have been disastrous for low-income and first-generation college students because it is unlikely that SLU would have offered the free services provided by these programs. Without the comprehensive array of services for SSS, it is possible that many high-risk students may not succeed at the university level.

Although TRIO programs are successful, documented evaluations are limited. The revenue, time, effort and labor centered in the original SSS have not been accompanied by a coordinated series of evaluation studies. This proposed study was needed to evaluate the program and as a result contribute to the lore of knowledge on SSS programs. In addition, this study provided information for SSS staff and university administrators, as well as state and federal legislators.
Numerous researchers in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other areas continue in the all too familiar nature versus nurture argument. Evidence supports the importance of genetics in the development of an individual, as well as the cultural circumstances and environment in which an individual grows up. In education these factors are also important. Research conducted during the 1980's confirms the significance of individual and cultural characteristics as critical factors in development, especially those that serve to differentiate one from the majority population in a given environment (Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering, 1989). Students bring with them and continue to be influenced by environmental forces and events that exist or occur beyond the boundaries of college campuses. Researchers have also questioned the role that these factors play in contributing to student achievement. Research done, prior to the 1980's, suggests that most of students' achievement success rates are due to factors unrelated to school. According to Spady (1971), college persisters are more likely to come from families whose parents are more educated. Obviously, first generation and low-income students do not come from parents who are educated; therefore, they are considered “at risk.” Traditionally, these students have had low grade-point averages, low college retention rates, have not graduated from college, and therefore have low earnings potential.

Although the immediate impact of high-risk students is on the students and the institutions that serve them, the long-term impact falls on society. The economy is directly
affected. According to Jones and Watson (1990, p. 27), the growth and productivity of the total economy can be constrained by the presence of a labor force that does not embody the levels of education and training needed for high levels of productivity. All factors considered along with the given labor market, colleges and universities are mandated to increase their commitment to high-risk students.

According to the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (1992, Fall), annual earnings of workers are related to the highest level of educational attainment. The report revealed that the average annual income for all occupations whose requirement is less than a bachelor's degree was $21,543, versus $31,029 in 1990 for workers with four years of college or more. Workers with fewer than four years of high school had average annual 1990 earnings of $19,168, and an 8.5 percent unemployment rate, compared to workers with five or more years of college, who had an average annual earnings of $49,153, and a 1.9 percent unemployment rate.

These findings document two very important factors concerning education. One is that, in general, the more formal education one has, the more he or she earns. The second is that the more education one has, the less likely he or she will be unemployed. These two facts together indicate the need for the federal government and post-secondary administrators to be proactive in education in order to contribute to the economic development and the security of America's future. Low income and first generation students are considered at risk and therefore, need to be targeted to receive auxiliary support and financial assistance from governmental revenues.
The purpose of this review is to (1) provide background information on the origins of tutoring and SSS programs, (2) reveal academic and non-academic factors related to academic performance and retention of high-risk students, (3) discuss need based theory as it relates to academic performance and retention of high-risk students and (4) provide information on retention programs and SSS programs. This literature review is designed to provide information regarding various types of supportive programs as they relate to retention and grade-point averages. This review of related literature is organized to give the reader background information regarding academic retention programs and on programs that involve academic and non-academic assistance and their relationship to grade-point averages and retention rates. Information and data provided on retention programs and SSS are used to evaluate the effectiveness of these services.

Minimal research on SSS and other TRIO programs in general has led to a literature review of persistence studies, withdrawal decisions, SSS programs, and various types of retention methods. Also, it is important to note that there have been considerably more studies on various forms of retention programs than on SSS programs.

This literature review begins with background information on tutoring in the United States and the origins of TRIO. The second component involves the importance of non-academic factors in student retention and grade point averages and lends support for the need of comprehensive assistance for students. Finally, studies of various retention programs, the Chicago SSS study, the WESTAT and SLU’s SSS reports complete the literature review. The rationale guiding this review of literature is grounded in humanistic psychology.

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Initially an assessment was made by this researcher to determine what non-academic factors contribute to grade-point averages and retention of high-risk students. The humanistic theory has been used to explore this phenomenon. After determining the relevant success factors, an appropriate method of applying these factors to a design for students is developed through the services provided by SSS. The final step is to determine whether provision of services in this format is effective, especially with respect to first-generation and low-income students.

The topics covered include various types of persistence studies, withdrawal decisions, retention methods, and SSS programs. Searches of government documents and LINUS (SLU's Library) were helpful in collecting data. In order to gain access to SSS information, an initial contact was made with the United States Department of Education. Attorney Maureen Hoyler, who drew up the legal documents for TRIO programs during the 1960's was very helpful in making referrals to the originators of these programs. After extensive correspondence with personnel at the U. S. Department of Education and TRIO organizations, a startling fact each revealed was that most of the information was verbal and that very little documentation had been compiled. Finally, a grant specialist at the U. S. Department of Education referred this researcher to Margaret Calahan of WESTAT who had completed a 1991-1992 study of SSS. Other searches in ERIC (SLU's Educational Resource Information Center) led to a SSS study conducted by staff at the University of Chicago and to various other retention program studies.
Background of Retention Programs and Origins of SSS Programs

College assistance programs (tutoring, counseling) have been fixtures in United States higher education for many years. Reports indicate that tutoring had its origins as early as 1936 when Harvard College employed tutors to prepare young men for their studies (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976, p. 46-47). Retention programs have been considered to be common components of some private and most four-year and two-year public colleges and universities for over thirty years. Martha Maxwell (1985) reported that in the 1960's when U.S. colleges and universities began to admit large numbers of low-income, educationally disadvantaged students, tutorial services were among the first programs organized on a large scale to help these students. Maxwell also noted that although tutoring has and is considered an extremely important tool in higher education, the retention rates of disadvantaged and/or at-risk students continue to be lower than those of more traditional students. As a result of continued low retention and graduation rates in the 1960's, Student Support Services (a federal program) was established as part of the nation’s commitment to promote equal access to higher education (NCEO A Journal, 1995).

In 1970, the Carnegie Commission published A Chance to Learn: An Action Agenda for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. This report presented a statement concerning the status of higher education and equal access. According to this report, America was founded upon the principle of equality of opportunity for all men. Yet, after almost twenty years, many Americans still do not have an equal chance to benefit from the nation’s progress and abundance. The Carnegie Commission further reported that the nation is committed, legally and morally, to ensuring opportunity for all of its citizens in all aspects
of life, and that education bears the fundamental responsibility for fulfilling this commitment.

These statements were not unlike others made over a century earlier by President Abraham Lincoln, who said in his first message to Congress in 1861, that the first purpose of government is to elevate the condition of men—to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuits for all, and to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life (Cervantes et al., 1970, p. 82). In order to offer each citizen a fair chance in life, colleges and universities must be responsible for developing strategies that will reduce attrition. Administrators, teachers, advisers, and counselors must be required to engage in behaviors to reduce the probability of risk among high risk groups (Jones & Watson, 1990, p.67).

According to Solomon and Solomon (1993), all students should be allowed access to higher education. They should be let in, because there are no good predictors for university performance nor are there any non-controversial standards for success. There are no reliable tests for readiness and willingness, no computer-graded exams to measure enthusiasm or creativity or intellectual curiosity. There is no way to tell which students are late bloomers. The only sure test for college preparedness is college.

Problems arose as more underprepared and high-risk students were admitted to colleges and universities. In the past two decades, the federal government has taken major steps to assist high-risk, first-generation and low-income students to become more fully integrated into the nation’s economic and social system by providing the opportunity to obtain a college education. While authorizing programs of financial aid for students,
Congress has also recognized that high-risk students face unique problems that decrease the probability of earning at least average grade-point averages (2.0 on 4.0 scale), of being retained, and ultimately of graduating from a university. Problems associated with high risk students include poor study habits, low self-esteem and self-confidence, inadequate college preparation, financial problems, lack of decision-making skills, inadequate career advising, poor interpersonal skills and lack of social integration into the university (NCEOA Journal, 1995).

When first initiated, the TRIO, inclusive of SSS programs, supported a total of 53,200 students. According to Former Congressman Louis Stokes (1995), the combined TRIO programs supported a total 687,100 students in 1995, nearly 13 times the total initially supported. Forty-two percent of these students were Caucasian, 35 percent were African-American, 15 percent were Hispanic, 4 percent were Native American, 4 percent were Asian-American. The current education bill, its legislative history, and annual appropriations established legislative intent and federal policy regarding TRIO outreach. The report of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources states:

Since the passage of the Higher Education Act in 1965, the importance of the programs authorized under what is now termed the Special Programs for Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds or TRIO authority has become increasingly recognized. Access and retention services are an essential component of the federal strategy to ensure equal educational opportunity (Mortenson, 1995, March, pp. 4 – 5).

Later in the same Committee Report:

The Secretary shall, in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, carry out a program of making grants and contacts designed to identify qualified individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, to prepare them for a program of post-secondary education, to provide support services for such students
who are pursuing programs of post-secondary education, to motivate and prepare students for doctoral programs, and to train individuals serving or preparing for service in programs and projects so designated (Mortenson, 1995, pp. 4 – 5).

The targeted student populations designated as disadvantaged under the law are:

a. **first-generation college students** neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree, and/or

b. **low-income individuals** whose taxable family incomes do not exceed 150 percent of poverty level (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996, p.6).

The Student Support Service programs have produced undeniable results and changed the lives of countless numbers of disadvantaged students, some of whom have gone on to live out dreams of becoming doctors or lawyers, and Members of Congress (TRIO Achievers, 1995). Former Student Support Service students are a proof that bright young Americans, bolstered by positive reinforcement and financial assistance, can offer leadership and hard work into the next century, when a highly technical work force will be the ante for any country wishing to be a player in tough world markets.

Factors Related to Academic Performance and Retention of High-risk Students

Disagreement has arisen regarding the success of college tutoring programs. According to Boylan, Bliss, and Bonham (1993), tutoring has consistently been found to have a positive impact on persistence and graduation, higher grades in courses for which tutoring was received, completion rates for courses in which tutoring was received and in student attitudes toward instruction.
Adversely, Noel, Levitz, and Kaufman (1982) have found that remedial services alone were insufficient to ensure student success, and they describe a comprehensive program that include negotiating both the academic and social system of the college environment. These authors state that retention programs should consider the whole person’s adjustment to the collegiate environment. Maxwell’s (1985) findings of tutorial programs are similar to those of Noel and Kaufman. She concludes that after nearly thirty years of academic assistance being provided to high-risk students, tutoring has not served to increase the retention rate of these students.

In recent years colleges and universities have begun to integrate supplemental instruction to promote academic persistence. Blanc, DeBuhr, and Martin (1993) conducted a study of an urban institution with over eleven thousand students regarding supplemental instruction. The emphasis was on shifting from identifying high-risk students to identifying high-risk courses and on the integration of learning skills instruction with course content. Supplemental instruction was designed to assist students in mastering course concepts and increasing competency in reading, reasoning, and study skills. In addition to supplemental instruction, informal study groups were facilitated by staff. Data from findings reveal that students who participated in Supplemental Instruction enrolled at a higher rate (73.2 percent) than students who were not participants in supplemental instruction (60.0 percent). Supplemental instruction participants’ course grades averaged 3.10 compared to non-participants’ 2.30 in the top quartile, and 1.72 compared to .88 in the bottom quartile.

Issues involving social problems, such as poor interpersonal skills, low self-esteem, financial difficulty, as well as academic problems, are both complex and multi-faceted and...
require careful evaluation, as do programs designed to deal systematically with each student individually and all students collectively. Two variables, student characteristics and institutional characteristics, will affect any student's performance at a college or university. According to Tinto (1993b, pp. 33-36), there must be a reasonable fit between the student's background, expectations, and abilities and the institution's structure and processes for positive outcomes to occur. Early approaches for the improvement of college retention and graduation rates were based to a large degree on study skills classes and development courses. Retention programs tended to focus on a single aspect of the college retention and graduation problem from a different model of performance rather than from using a holistic approach in order to satisfy basic human needs. The major assumption was that if the deficit was eliminated, the student would do well. Unfortunately, as most studies have concluded, these programs that only focus on a single aspect of the individual (student) have been generally ineffective, (Richardson & Skinner, 1990).

In addition to traditional academic programs operating independently of academic departments, Rutgers University has established a Gateway Program. Faculty from ten academic departments used alternative methods of instruction, group work, and quality faculty/student interactions to assist high-risk students. Bringing in the academic departments reflects a movement away from addressing the high-risk students as if the student is to blame and, instead, focuses on identifying high-risk courses (Kluepfel, et al., 1994). Interaction between faculty and students was found to be very important to the success of the program. Gateway instructors integrated effective study strategies, reading techniques and note taking skills into their classroom activities. The Educational
Opportunity Fund (EOF), an academic support program, offers comprehensive support services for economically disadvantaged students. Included in these services are: a five-week orientation during the summer, financial and psychological counseling, survival skills workshops, and academic advising. Rutgers’ retention rate is close to 90 percent for all students (Kluepfel, et al.).

A major perception is that if the political and financial pressure on colleges and universities to increase their retention rates were to be converted into attempts to provide high-risk students with a comprehensive array of services to assist the holistic needs of students, it is possible that high-risk retention rates would increase over the next decade or so. Both socio-economic status (SES) and ability are important determinants of the probability of moving from high school to college.

Subsection Summary

Tutoring programs have been components in colleges and universities since 1936 and these programs have continued to be viable components designed to ensure college success. Prior to 1936, President Abraham Lincoln alluded to the necessity of government assistance in the elevation of living conditions for all people. Jones & Watson (1990, p.67) concluded that institutions of higher learning must be responsible for developing strategies that will insure college success for at risk students. In addition, the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) reported that the nation bears the fundamental responsibility for ensuring that all of its citizens receive opportunities in all aspects of their lives, and that education is the vehicle to fulfill this commitment (Yount, 1989).
Both tutoring programs and TRIO programs have made their mark on higher education. Tutoring programs had their origins in American higher education as early as 1936 when Howard College employed tutors to assist its young men with their studies. TRIO programs (SSS) were established in the early 1960's to promote America's commitment for equal access. These programs were designed to provide services that would address a variety of needs to students (counseling, workshops, financial aid and career assistance). Tutoring alone has not been proved effective in increasing retention and graduate rates.

Non-academic factors

Comprehensive Programs Relative to Retention

Boylan, Bliss, and Bonham (1997) conducted a study, drawing a sample of institutions from over 3,000 U.S. colleges and universities. Using a circular, systematic sampling procedure, they selected 160 institutions by institutional type and geographical region to insure representativeness. The following components or factors were associated with student success:

1. presence of centralized program organizational structure,
2. presence of mandatory assessment of students,
3. presence of mandatory placement of students,
4. availability of tutorial services,
5. availability of advising/counseling services, and
6. presence of a program evaluation.
Findings were conclusive that a centralized administrative structure, academic, career, financial aid, and personal advising and counseling, as well as ongoing and systematic evaluations appeared to have definite positive relationships with academic success. Kulik, Kulik, and Schwab (1983) found that the more comprehensive a program’s services, the more likely the students would be successful. In addition, Roueche (1986, pp. 86-97) has presented research regarding the effects of centralized services that included non-academic factors and provisions such as counseling and advising services as being more successful than provisions of decentralized tutoring services.

According to Sedlacek (1987), seven factors are associated with the success of high-risk students. They include the following:

1. confidence and a positive self-image,
2. realistic self-appraisal,
3. demonstrated community services,
4. ability to set and maintain long-term goals.
5. availability of support persons or mentors,
6. successful leadership experience, and
7. knowledge in a traditional or non-traditional field.

Assessment and implementation of a plan to assist and provide services for these non-academic characteristics are steps toward designing interventions to increase retention, grade-point averages, and ultimately graduation from a college or university. The plan to assist and provide services should include matching an individual student’s characteristics and the institution’s academic and social components. Mallette and Cabera (1991) found that
a student’s commitment to college completion and commitment depend on academic and social integration and have a direct effect on decisions to persist or withdraw from the institution.

According to McIntire, et al. (1992), the importance of non-academic as well as academic factors in student persistence indicates the need for methods to help achieve the following goals:

1. improving time management and study skills,
2. discussing academic concerns and providing weekly guidance about course progress,
3. identifying career choices and majors,
4. improving student-faculty interactions,
5. improving interpersonal skills, and facilitating students’ involvement in college activities.

Programs with these goals are not unusual on college campuses. Volunteer workshops are often available on study skills, campus adjustment, or career development. However, in the McIntire pilot projects (McIntire, et al., 1992), such volunteer workshops compared unfavorably with a required study-skills course for college credit. Workshops did not make strong demands for students’ time, and their impact on retention variables was narrow and short-lived. As a result, McIntire proposed a three hour credit course class, General Education (GNED) that integrated the non-academic factors into the curriculum. The purpose was to increase students’ attention, motivation, and attendance. The results of the McIntire study reveal that retention rates for GNED 100 students was 92 percent for the
fall semester of the second year and 95 percent for fall of the third year. The retention rate for all other students beginning the fall of their second year was 82 percent. The retention rate for all students beginning the fall of their third year was only 72 percent.

De Silva’s (1986) study of Operation Success at Wichita State University reveals a supportive framework for assisting disadvantaged students in successfully completing their college schooling. The program is organized into three complementary components: (1) tutorial, (2) cultural enrichment activities, and (3) research and evaluation. From this qualitative study, results reveal that not only were the targeted population of 250 students retained but also that eight of the 36 graduates, over 40 percent, received Boeing Scholarships for high academic achievement, and 5 were awarded Academic Incentive Scholarships based on academic progress. No quantitative results were calculated.

Institutional Climates Relative to Retention

High-risk, disadvantaged students are often confronted with the non-academic factor of institutional climates that are non-accepting. These climates are neither characterized by attitudes that reflect aggressive stands against discrimination, nor attitudes that reflect the acceptance of a co-existence of cultures and value systems. According to Johnson (1994), students make decisions to withdraw on the basis of academic performance and psychological states. A student’s psychological state is influenced by campus integration and social forces. Noel, Levitz, and Kaufman (1982) noted that the personal characteristics and attitudes of campus professionals are of greater importance than the design and structure of the learning assistance program. According to Davis & Murrell (1993, pp. 20-21) the college environment has a far greater impact on college outcomes than students’
backgrounds and background experiences. Davis and Murrell further stated that colleges should provide opportunities for interaction and involvement and establish a climate conducive to responsible participation. Therefore, institutions should have clearly identified resources that will intervene when students are confronted with academic or personal decisions.

Roueche (1984) stated that no institution can escape the problem of high-risk students, and synthesized eleven “elements of success” from information provided by institutions that reported 50 percent or better retention rates. These include the following:

1. strong administrative support,
2. mandatory assessment and placement upon entry,
3. structured courses and follow-up of non-attendees,
4. award of credit for developmental courses,
5. flexible completion features,
6. multiple learning system,
7. use of only volunteer instructors,
8. extensive use of peer tutors,
9. frequent monitoring of student,
10. interfacing with subsequent course, and
11. program evaluation.

Billson and Terry (1987) found that the failure of an institution to administer the eight phases of the Student Retention Model (outreach to high schools, recruitment/selection, assessment, preparation, orientation, integration, maintenance and separation) puts the
student/institution relationship at risk. The institution should be committed to support each student in reaching his or her potential that will, in turn, improve student morale, success, and retention.

Weissman (1990) examined relationships among educational strategy; the relatively fixed institutional characteristics of size, type, admission criteria, and student retention. She hypothesized that educational strategy (patterns of practices engaged in by colleges and universities to support undergraduate education) will have more of an effect than tutoring alone on student retention at less selective public institutions. Weissman concentrated her study on issues related to institutional characteristics. Weissman’s sample consisted of 528 higher education institutions, 301 four-year colleges and 227 comprehensive universities, which responded to the Academic Management Practices Survey (AMPS) for the research program on the organization context for teaching and learning. Administrators were asked in an open-ended questionnaire about institutional practices that positively affect undergraduate education. In a multiple regression analysis of all four institutional characteristics, selectivity by the university demonstrated the strongest relationship to student retention.

Selectivity alone contributed 40 percent to the variance in retention. Selectivity, control and size combined to explain 44.2 percent in the variance in student retention. At less selective institutions, educational strategies including faculty-student interaction, structured and systematic academic assistance and institutional support was found to be directly related to student retention. Therefore, an educational strategy should include academic integration, social integration, and institutional commitment. In particular,
Mallette and Cabera (1991) noted that institutional commitment contributed most to persistence, followed by academic performance and students' attitudes regarding financial aid.

Programs at various colleges and universities also lend credibility to the need for non-academic assistance in efforts to increase student retention in higher education. For example, the Office of Retention at Henderson State University in Arizona provides a wide range of non-academic assistance services that include summer freshman orientation, assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, peer mentoring, and academic assistance for probationary students. Results of the Henderson State University study by Stein Miller (1991) revealed that the students who were required to meet with personnel in the counseling center, a student advisor, and each current professor three times during the semester benefited and were retained at the University. Such an approach is also submitted by the work of Noel, Levitz, and Kaufman (1982) in which they describe a comprehensive program designed to provide a range of services and consider the adjustment of the whole person to the college environment. These authors note that students must learn to motivate themselves, to understand their learning strengths and weaknesses, to negotiate the academic and social system, and to alter previously established attributes about their own potential and self-worth. As a result of the research, transition has been added and orientation activities, and study or survival skills were added to the list of desirable learning assistance services.

Based on Tinto's theoretical model of students' integration, Pascarella, Smart, and Ethington (1986) conducted research into the social and academic systems of institutions.
A nine-year study at over eighty-five institutions confirmed the importance of person-environment fit as a salient influence on persistence. They found that the relative importance of academic and social integration in predicting persistence suggests that what happens to a student after he or she enrolls at an institution may be as important in ultimate persistence in postsecondary education as the influence of pre-college variables. Therefore, colleges and universities should seek to enhance student persistence through purposeful institutional policies and practices designed to enhance students social and academic integration.

In another study, Tinto (1975) conducted research on the work of Van Genney’s “Stages of Passage.” Tinto concludes that the process of student persistence functions similarly to that of becoming incorporated into the life of human societies and groups and that this process, especially in the first year of college, is marked by stages through which individuals must pass in order to persist in college. Students who are more successful in college also achieve or pass the “Stages of Passage” successfully.

Increasing the persistence of disadvantaged students to graduation is the long-term goal of the retention program at Glassboro State College. In the fall, 1985, a Minority Student Retention team was appointed by the Deputy Provost. The Academic Center provided a variety of services during the freshman year: freshmen seminar with formal instruction and follow-up mentoring, peer mentoring and peer tutoring, leadership programs, residence-hall programming, and cross-cultural awareness events. Prior to implementation of the retention plan, the minority retention rate was 59 percent. After implementation of the retention program, the number and percentages of students who re-enrolled during the fall of 1986, was 73.4 percent. During the fall of 1987, it was 76.4 percent, and during the Fall
of 1988 it was 76.5 percent. Clearly the percentages of students retained increased. According to Harris (1991), Glassboro demonstrated success in meeting its objective of increasing students' persistence and retention.

Counseling as Related to Retention

Counseling services have been offered as retention strategies in order to address the lack of information provided to offer encouragement for high-risk students. Garnett (1990) describes the results of Student in Retention—a program for probationary and suspended students. Each student must sign an agreement to visit the counseling center at least twice during the semester, to have a conference with each of his or her instructors, to meet with an academic advisor at least three times per semester, and to engage in two hours of supervised study per week. Results showed a success rate of 50 percent for Students in Retention for the first semester and 61 percent for the second semester. Carroll (1988) also addressed the issue of freshman retention and found that the role and scope of counseling services during the freshman year is of primary importance in the retention of educationally underrepresented students.

In addition, research revealed that students regarded counseling and counseling services as being positive and contributed to their remaining at various universities. In particular, Thomas (1987) found that California State University, Sacramento, Academic Talent Search program participants viewed the program as highly positive. The program offered counseling, faculty interactions, and support groups. Participation was associated with positive changes in attitudes toward academic subjects, school, and self. Also, the respondents to a follow-up survey were active in a wide variety of extracurricular activities.
had positive self-concepts, and viewed themselves as being in control of their lives. In addition, they had formulated plans for the future, including career goals. Richardson (1994) found that in their examinations of non-cognitive factors on retention, students’ confidence, attitude, and motivation often determined their degree of success. Also, Franklin (1985) reported that high-risk (low-income and first-generation) students lack information networks that are usually available to middle class youth. Franklin’s study also reveals that regardless of their race, ethnicity, or place of residence, high-risk students usually encounter five problems.

1. High school guidance counselors have previously either overlooked high-risk students, or counselors were unavailable. Students are neither placed in nor encouraged to enroll in college preparatory classes, and they often receive minimal information or help in considering postsecondary education.

2. Most high-risk students do not get encouragement or support from home for enrollment in college. Parents and students lack information about available financial support for college, and many parents believe that immediate employment is preferable to college.

3. They are rarely aware of the range of available postsecondary programs, academic and other requirements for admission, and related costs. For lack of knowledge, many disadvantaged students view higher education as an impossible dream.
4. Disadvantaged students may have experienced limited exposure to career options and have vague career aspirations. They often fail to understand the importance of high school course selection and of academic requirements for college preparation or do not perceive them as relevant to their career interests.

5. Rural and urban youth are isolated from sources of information about and support for opportunities in higher education.

Informal Contact as Related to Retention

Informal contact such as caring is a very important aspect of retention. Ellen Kaiden (1994) found that the significance of caring in the tutorial center as well as caring in the tutor/tutee relationship point to the need for training programs and hiring practices of tutors and professional staff that promote support, concern, and respect for tutees. She also found in her study that workshops that teach tutors to enhance only academic skills are missing the caring component needed by high-risk students.

Other researchers also allude to the importance of informal contact in the learning environment. Hall, Gwengrass, and Metcalf (1993) revealed new evidence of students’ learning as it is associated with interaction in an informal contact between student and student, and student and tutor. Students voiced the need for academic socialization and a framework for dialogue. Students in the study reported on their own attitudes and behavior in both optional scheduled tutorials and unscheduled/informal support that depended directly on the student’s own initiative. Findings indicated that at the post-foundation level the tutor is perceived as an important advisor, and is the person to whom the student immediately
turns to for a wide range of general advice. Eighty percent of students’ responses were associated with tutor/student contact.

Financial Assistance as Related to Retention

One of the biggest challenges to expanding college participation and success among high-risk students is overcoming barriers created by inadequate financial resources to pay for college. As a result, the Pell Grant program was established to help students from the least advantaged background to succeed in college. According to Mitchem (1997, p. 38), students who were at risk of dropping out increased their chances of persisting if they received a Pell Grant. Students who received a Pell Grant had a persistent rate only eight percentage points lower than undergraduates who did not receive a Pell Grant (pp. 39-41).

Rising college costs, nonetheless, increased competition for state and federal resources, stagnating real income for many individuals and families; and major shifts in the age and the ethnic components of America’s population have placed pressure on college continuance rates. The Pell Grant seemingly no longer provides the financial aid necessary for college completion.

McPherson and Schapiro (1997) have argued that real increases in net tuition have impaired access for students from low-income families. Specifically, the gap in college completion and enrollment between students from different backgrounds and those from needy families has been growing at an alarming rate. McPherson and Schapiro argue that the nation needs a higher education program that provides assistance to the student for whom the issues of college affordability is the most pressing.

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Various researchers have noted the impact of financial aid on low-income students. Sayre (1980) studied six factors which affect access to postsecondary education for disadvantaged students. The researcher grouped barriers and their associated intervention strategies into six categories:

(1) cost barrier and financial aid programs,
(2) academic barriers and developmental programs,
(3) information barriers and career/educational counseling programs,
(4) institutional barriers and advocacy/institutional change,
(5) individual/social barriers and counseling/encouragement for disadvantaged students, and
(6) adjustment barriers and special service programs.

Sayre (1980) concluded that the cost barrier was perceived as significantly more obstructive than academic information, counseling programs, institutional, or social barriers.

Crawford’s (1966) study concluded that a national program of financial assistance for students with limited financial means could effectively reduce academic talent loss by enabling students to enroll in college immediately following their high school graduation and by providing the financial means for them to complete their studies without interruption. The primary findings of the study reveal significant differences between the college-going characteristics of students who were offered aid and those who were not.

St. John (1990) chose four price variables (tuition, grants, loans and work-study) to view students’ persistence decisions. Findings revealed that when price and financial assistance were considered, tuition had a significant and negative association with
persistence. The amount of loans and work awarded were significantly and negatively associated with persistence, while the amount of grants awarded was not negatively associated with persistence. Aid packages that included grants only, loans only, grants plus loans, and grants plus work-study were significantly and negatively associated with persistence. However, when grants, loans, and work-study were offered as combined packages, there was a significant and positive association with persistence.

Other studies in college financing revealed differences. St. John (1990) found that low-income students are more responsive to grants than loans. Middle-income students are more responsive to loans than grants or tuition costs, and upper-income students are only slightly responsive to either grants or loans or tuition costs. Terkla (1988), using a causal model, designed a study to answer the question. Does financial aid enhance undergraduate persistence? Financial aid was found to have the third strongest direct effect on persistence after high school grade-point averages and degree level goal.

Somers (1995) created and tested a model of matriculation to examine the relationship between background achievement, student financial aid, and college experience using three logistical models: first time attendance, within year persistence, and year to year persistence. Results indicated a positive association between all income groups and first time attendance for financial aid applicants. A significant positive association was noted for within year persistence for all students. Only 4 percent of the students were less likely to persist from year to year.

Inadequate funding of the Pell Grant for low-income students has led to an increase in reliance on student loans to finance post-secondary education. According to Wolanin
(1997, p. 66), grants are more effective than loans in encouraging low-income students to pursue higher education. Therefore, many low-income students entering colleges and universities find that the Pell Grant, which has declined by 40 percent after accounting for inflation, does not provide sufficient financial aid. Therefore, a large number of young people and others who could benefit from post-secondary education do not receive the opportunity to remain in institutions of higher learning. Kramer (1998, pp. 8-10) states; they could not afford the cost of going to college, even the cost of subsistence where tuition was free.”

Family Characteristics as Related to Retention

Studies have been conducted that reflect the impact of SES status, family background, and the need for counseling high-risk students. Sewell and Shah (1967) noted that the likelihood of an individual dropping out of college has been shown to be related to the characteristics of the family. Children from lower SES families exhibited higher rates of dropout than children from higher SES families, even when intelligence was taken into account. In another study Sewell and Shah (1968), noted that the father’s educational level has a slightly stronger effect than mother’s educational level on college plans and college graduation for males. Both father’s and mother’s educational level have equal effect for females. A high educational achievement level of both parents was found to be significant in motivating both males and females.

Subsection Summary

Studies on retention programs include those conducted by various researchers. These studies shown that non-academic factors could serve as barriers to satisfactory grade-point
averages, retention, and graduation rates for high-risk or first-generation and low-income students. The research reveals that multi-component programs that involve changes in institutional structures and procedures, as well as student adjustments to the demands of the collegiate environment, are required to deal with the challenges of high-risk students. Various programs and studies cite the need for non-academic assistance. Tinto (1993a) argues that a reasonable fit must exist between student’s background, expectations, and abilities, and the institution’s structure and processes for positive outcomes to occur. Kaiden’s (1994) research supports the significance of affective concerns, such as caring not only in the tutorial center, but also in the relationship between tutor and tutee. Further studies indicate that background characteristics were less critical to long-term retention than the students’ level of integration within the institution. Academic and social factors are considered important to the development of strong educational goals and institutional commitments (Lyons, 1991). Tutor/student, cultural enrichment activities, financial aid programs, counseling programs, and special service programs to remove adjustment barriers were noted in the studies as being related to students’ grade-point averages, retention, and graduation rates. Positive changes in attitude toward academic subjects, school, and self were associated with higher retention rates.

Need Based Theory as Related to Retention

Non-academic retention programs that involve changes in institutional procedures and students’ adjustments to the demands of the collegiate environment are needed to deal efficiently with the challenges associated with schooling the high-risk population. The approach to specific implementation of procedures designed to meet the holistic needs of
students had its origins in humanism as outlined by Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualization Theory (1967, p.526). Self-actualization focuses on the basic subjective aspects of one being able to fulfill basic needs (food, shelter, love, belonging, self-esteem) before one is able to fulfill higher order needs.

Several researchers studied persistence based on non-academic factors that referenced "need based theory." Grimes and Antworth (1996) administered the Withdrawing/Non-Returning Student Survey to college students over a six-week period during this semester. Student responses were analyzed to determine reasons for dropping out of the institution. Student characteristics, including gender and ethnicity, demonstrated significant relationships to non-retention. Women reported health, family, and emotional reasons. Men reported non-challenging course work. Minority withdrawals were related to multiple academic and social factors, as well as transportation problems which may be associated with lower SES status. Grade-point averages were lower for men and students reporting budgeting problems. External factors, including time constraints, job demands, financial needs, and health problems contributed to withdrawal decisions. Academic ability was not shown to be related to persistence for either women or Blacks. Attention should, therefore, be given to satisfying the basic needs of students.

The general analysis of the current situation at Southeastern Louisiana University reveals a number of response patterns that contribute to the low GPA, retention, and graduation rates. This information was based on extensive interviews and discussions with high-risk students, counselors, faculty, and administrators. According to the college newsletter (Basically Speaking, 1996), high-risk students are less involved in the
University’s social, cultural, and academic life. These students seldom seek academic advice and often receive less than adequate advice when they do. High-risk students often have fewer contacts with their instructors outside the classroom and are less likely to seek academic help than their more traditional peers.

Grosset (1993) notes that not only are colleges competing with family, work, friends, and activities in the external environment, but that many students are also currently embracing multiple roles. Johnson (1994) states that students make decisions to withdraw on the basis of academic performance and psychological states, with psychological states being influenced by campus integration and societal forces. Academic performance and psychological states were noted to be the consequence of the relationships between students’ academic or personal characteristics and institutional factors. Those students who dropped out made the following responses: less efficient time, and lack of management and study skills. Their perception of instructors was that the instructors were not available outside of class.

Subsection Summary

The future in higher education for high-risk students is not automatic. Certain needs will have to be met or fulfilled before students can become successful in the university. Success for these students will require a carefully coordinated approach with investments in financial aid, career planning, academic advising, counseling, and other services to improve grade-point averages, retention, and ultimately graduation from a university.
Student Support Services Programs as Related to Retention

The WESTAT Study

Margaret Callahan (1992) conducted a national study of SSS programs. The WESTAT study involved over 603 colleges and universities nationwide which had previously administered an SSS program for three years or longer. Institutions of higher education were identified by using the 1987-1988 SSS project report file. Findings were conclusive regarding the importance of counseling for program participants.

A stratified sample of 200 Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) was selected for the mail and telephone survey. The questionnaires contained items regarding services offered by SSS programs and policies of the IHE’s concerning delivery of SSS and similar services. A sub-sample of 30 IHE’s SSS programs was drawn, using student surveys, service records, and student transcripts to obtain an in-depth look at the SSS progress. The sampling rate within institutions was determined by rounding up the target sample size of 125. Results from this study revealed that the most prevalent type of services used was professional counseling—78 percent. Counseling was found to have a significant, positive relationship with retention. Tutoring was found to be second to counseling in retention of students at the universities.

SSS - Chicago State

Chicago State University (CSU) is one of few institutions that has a published study of its SSS programs. Services and support activities for students include writing instructions, mathematics, study skills, personal counseling, academic advising, tutoring, cultural exposure, and career awareness. The Student Support Services Program at Chicago State
University is a counseling and academic support program, serving students who are low-income, first-generation, and/or physically handicapped. The program is funded by the U. S. Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. The counseling and academic support activities provided include the following: instruction in writing, mathematics, and study skills; personal counseling; academic advisement; tutoring; exposure to cultural and educational activities career awareness activities, and activities designed to increase enrollment in graduate and professional school programs.

Findings indicate that the SSS program has contributed to increasing the overall Chicago State University retention and graduation rates. CSU’s SSS freshmen had higher retention rates than CSU’s non-SSS freshmen who enrolled during the 1985-1987 academic year.

If it were not for the Student Support Services program, the Chicago State University overall retention rates could be considerably lower (Pinkston McKee, 1991).

Southeastern Louisiana University’s SSS Program

The SSS Program at SLU began in the early 1980's with a director, a counselor, several tutors, and a secretary located in an isolated building on campus. There was one typewriter in the department. Almost fifteen years later, the program has grown to include a director, two counselors, a tutor coordinator, two graduate assistants, part-time faculty, a secretary, and fifteen peer tutors. An academic assistance lab is furnished with the following equipment: computers, overhead projector, TDD (Text Telephone) phones for the hearing impaired, Tele-vista for the visually impaired, television and VCR and the latest software for
academic and non-academic improvements, as well as, graphing calculators, recorders, and other similar equipment.

SLU has an open-admissions policy and admits all students who possess a high school diploma or GED. The average entering ACT composite score is below 19. Students who score less than 18 (82 percent of high-risk students) present a challenge to the institution. The challenge is to prepare the high-risk students for college and ultimately to retain and graduate them from the university. These students enter the University from fourteen feeder parishes and often exhibit different levels of skills from those students who attend the more selective universities in the state.

A large percent of SLU students (high-risk) have concerns related to academic, financial, and personal problems, which are generally associated with inadequate high school preparation, first-generation and low-income status, and a lack of role models who value and stress schooling. These students also need assistance in improving their self-identity, self-esteem, cultural knowledge, and in the basic academic skills required to complete successfully the basic components of the general education sequence (English, mathematics, and science). Some of these weaknesses are initially reflected in the low ACT scores (see Table 2.1).

ACT scores at SLU are approximately 1.5 points below the state average, and 2 points below the national average. A needs assessment conducted within the first month of SSS participants show non-academic problems encountered by high risk students.

1. Low-income—financial
2. First-generation—none or limited parental support
Table 2.1 ACT Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average ACT Scores</th>
<th>Average ACT Scores</th>
<th>Average ACT Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLU</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>18.88</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>18.78</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Southeastern Louisiana University Office of Institutional Research

3. Difficulty adjusting to campus life
4. Lack of assertiveness when interacting with faculty
5. Anxiety, discomfort, and difficulty solving problems related to University policies
6. Difficulty in interacting with faculty and teaching assistants
7. Lack of knowledge about requirements and demands of various career options
8. Limited exposure and access to meaningful educational and cultural activities
9. External responsibilities
10. Single parent coordinating work, family and school
11. Lack of family network
12. Deficient in time management skills
13. Lack of career information
14. Lack of appropriate role models
15. High attrition rates
16. Poor organizational skills
17. Poor or lack of critical thinking skills
18. Low self-esteem and self-confidence
19. Lack of or poor campus integration (SSS Pre-entrance Survey 1995)

In order to increase student GPA’s that will lead to higher retention and graduation
rates, SLU’s SSS has identified eleven major objectives to fulfill the two major goals of the
Program. The two goals are these: (1) to increase the retention and graduation rates of first-
generation and low-income students; and (2) to foster an institutional climate of acceptance
supportive of first-generation and low-income students.

The eleven objectives designed to fulfill these goals are as follows:
1. to identify and select 250 low-income, and first-generation students;
2. to conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine the individual academic,
   financial aid, career, and personal needs of participants;
3. to track participants by using the University’s online mainframe data system and
   the SSS database;
4. to assist participants in obtaining a full financial aid package;
5. to furnish tutoring services, supplemental instruction, and accommodations to
   ensure that each participant will attain and maintain a good academic standing
   (2.0 on a 4.0 scale);
6. to render counseling services to address each participant's personal, academic, career, and financial aid needs;

7. to promote participants' academic and personal success through peer mentoring and workshops;

8. to furnish opportunities for exposure and involvement in culturally enriching activities to increase participants' cultural awareness;

9. to provide structured academic, auxiliary, and counseling services to participants;

10. to assist participants with professional and graduate school options through counseling services; and

11. to support opportunities for Student Support Services staff and participants to be an integral part of the entire University, receiving services from and providing services to the institution.

The purpose of SSS is to assist the high-risk student to increase his/her grade-point average, to be retained and ultimately to graduate from the university. The success of the program lies in the perception that students are more than just students and that they possess a combination of cares, concerns, and needs. Therefore, the provision of non-academic services is as crucial and important as the provision of academic assistance services. The major focus is to respond effectively and quickly to the individual holistic needs of the University's students through a cost-effective, flexible, structured, and comprehensive array of services to ensure higher grade-point averages, retention, and ultimate graduation from the University.
Subsection Summary

Several studies of SSS (WESTAT, Chicago, and SLU) reveal the need for comprehensive services for high-risk students. The WESTAT study conducted by Margaret Callahan reveals that counseling has a significant positive relationship to retention. A study of the Chicago State University concluded the holistic services (instruction, counseling, cultural, and other activities) contributes to increased retention and graduation rates of SSS freshmen over non-SSS freshmen. A large percentage of SLU’s students are faced with academic, financial, and personal problems. As previously stated, these problems occur in areas such as self-esteem, self-identity, cultural knowledge, adequate high school preparation, and academic skills. Since SLU has an open admission policy, approximately 86 percent of all students are considered high-risk, and thus SSS eligible. Nearly 70 percent of these students are considered to be both low-income and first-generation.

SLU’s SSS program is committed to increasing grade-point averages, and retention and graduation rates at the university. A comparison of SSS students and SSS eligible students was conducted over a three-year period. Assessments of both retention and grade-point averages reveals that SSS participants were greater than the retention and grade-point averages of SSS eligible students who did not participate.

Evidence demonstrates that the highly structured and systematic SSS programs could significantly increase the academic success of all students and more especially those students who are first-generation and low-income. Objectives of the program suggest that the proactive Humanist Approach is best for serving high-risk students. This approach focuses on Abraham Maslow’s Self-Actualization Model (Maslow, 1967, p. 526).
Overall Summary

Although tutoring programs have been in existence in United States higher education for over sixty years, it appears that tutoring alone is not sufficient to ensure higher grade-point averages, retention, and graduation rates. The task of providing assistance to students in colleges and universities is seen as a function of the United States government. Non-academic retention programs and Student Support Services programs were implemented by the federal government during the early 1960's. Research on retention programs, the WESTAT Study, Chicago’s SSS Program, and SLU’s SSS program reveal that multi-faceted structures and systematic programs result in higher grade-point averages and retention rates.

Programs that offer only tutoring have not met with a great deal of success for high-risk college students. These students continue to drop out of colleges at alarming rates. According to President Abraham Lincoln (Cervantes, 1970), Jones and Watson (1990), and the SREB (Yount, 1989) our nation was founded upon the principle of equality of opportunity, the improvement and elevation of all people, and the principle that education is the vehicle to fulfill those purposes. As a result of the influx of high-risk students to college and universities during the early 1960's, non-academic, retention programs and TRIO programs (SSS for the purpose of this study) were implemented. SSS was designed to ensure the retention and graduation rates of first-generation and low-income students and to foster an institutional climate supportive of this student population.

Non-academic retention programs were developed on the idea that other factors are associated with success of high-risk students. These include confidence and a positive self-image, realistic self-appraisal and acceptance of a diverse culture and value system. Results
of studies involving non-academic retention programs include but are not limited to the following programs noted below.

1. Students who met with personnel in the counseling center and each current professor three times during the semester benefited and were retained at the University (Miller, 1991);

2. Educational strategy (patterns of practices engaged in by colleges and universities to support education) has more of an effect on retention at less selective institutions (Weissman, 1990);

3. Improving time management and study skills, offering weekly guidance about course progress, identifying career choices and majors, creating opportunities for student-faculty interaction and students’ involvement in college activities contributed to higher retention rates (McIntire, et al., 1992);

4. Undergraduate retention is multi-dimensional, and the dropout process is a function of the student’s background, character, educational goals, and institutional commitment (Tinto, 1991); and

5. Caring is significant in the tutorial center (Kaiden, 1994).

Other researchers--Hall, Gwengrass and Metcalfe (1993), de Silva (1986), Crawford (1966) and Thomas (1987)--associated non-academic factors with retention. These factors included informal contact, cultural activities, financial aid programs, counseling programs, and attitudes as important determinants in college retention.

The WESTAT Study of SSS programs, Chicago State University, and SLU’s SSS programs, validated the success of a structured, systematic program that provides a
comprehensive array of services. Non-academic factors are closely associated with retention. SSS programs are more likely to attend to non-cognitive variables.

**Conceptual Framework**

The concept of providing comprehensive holistic assistance to high-risk students (SSS model) has its roots in Humanistic Psychology. Two values of the Association of Humanistic Psychology (Petersen, 1991, pp. 218-224) are these: (1) a belief in the worth of persons and dedication to the development of human potential; and (2) a recognition of the profound problems affecting our world and a responsibility for hope and constructive change.

Humanistic psychologists state that each of us not only has the ability to cope with stress but also to control our lives and to achieve what we desire (Santork, 1994). According to the humanistic perspective, although each person (student) has potential for self-actualization, the mind is strongly influenced by determining forces in society and in the unconscious. This same perspective also theorizes that some of these forces are negative and destructive. The task of professionals, therefore, is to assist individuals (students) in acquiring feelings of dignity and self-worth, and their increasing capacity to develop personal competence. As personal competence develops, so does the enhancement of the quality of life. Student Support Services personnel seek to develop an appropriate institutional and organizational environment whereby students can grow, flourish, and improve their quality of life.

According to Maslow (1967, p. 224), humans strive for an upper level of capabilities, and this upper level of capabilities can be attained only after basic, instinctual needs have been satisfied. From that perspective Maslow designed a hierarchy of needs, Figure 1:
According to Maslow, the person does not fulfill the second need until the demands of the first have been satisfied, nor the third until the second has been satisfied, and so on.

The SSS concept of providing holistic, comprehensive services is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. These students (targeted population) often face difficulties in satisfying basic needs. High-risk students also express feelings of alienation and isolation, and, therefore, do not satisfy the need to feel a sense of belonging on the college campus.

According to Maslow (1970, pp. 218 – 224), the reason people do not move to the next higher level is due to the hindrances placed in their way by society. Traditional methods of designing education to meet the needs of the most privileged may have been hindrances for the disadvantaged, and recommendations can be made in education that will allow a student to change from person-stunting tactics into person-growing approaches.

![Hierarchy of needs diagram]

**Figure 2.1 Hierarchy of needs**
Several points educators could use to respond to an individual's potential were identified by Maslow.

1. We should help people discover their vocation in life, calling, or destiny;
2. We must accept the person;
3. We must see that the person's basic needs are satisfied; and
4. We must teach people to be good choosers.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the SSS as these services relate to the retention rates and grade-point averages of high-risk students. One of the major goals of SSS is to provide assistance to students who are at risk of not graduating. This proposed study looked at whether SSS assists in retaining students to their third year of college, having earned forty-eight semester hours, and in acquiring and maintaining increased grade-point averages (2.0 on a 4.0 scale). To do so, this researcher compared the retention rates and grade-point averages of those students who participated in SSS (treatment group) with their contemporaries, students who did not participate in SSS (control group). It was hypothesized that the treatment group would have higher retention rates and higher grade-point averages than the students in the control group.

To ensure that the treatment group and the control group are comparable, demographic differences (ACT scores and grade-point averages) in the two groups were first be analyzed. No significant differences were expected. At the beginning of a student's third year, it was expected that retention rates and grade-point averages between the two groups would differ because of the holistic array of services received by the treatment group.
In Figure 2.1, the independent variable is the comprehensive array of services offered by SSS. These services include academic assistance, workshops, and counseling. The independent variables are increased grade-point averages and increased retention.

Both Null hypotheses ($H_0$) and Alternative hypotheses ($H_a$) were derived from the literature review and from evaluations of SSS.

1. $H_0$: SSS freshmen participants' grade-point averages will not be greater than non-SSS freshmen who attended an open learning lab only.
   
   $H_a$: SSS freshmen participants' grade-point averages will be greater than non-SSS freshmen who attended an open learning lab only.

2. $H_0$: SSS sophomore participants' grade-point averages will not be greater than non-SSS sophomores who attended an open learning lab only.
   
   $H_a$: SSS sophomore participants' grade-point averages will be greater than non-SSS sophomores who attended an open learning lab only.

3. $H_0$: The proportion of freshmen being retained with 24 earned semester hours is the same for SSS participants and non-SSS participants who attended an open learning lab only.
   
   $H_a$: The proportion of freshmen being retained with 24 hour earned semester hours is not the same for SSS participants and non-SSS participants who attended an open learning lab only.

4. $H_0$: The proportion of sophomores being retained with 48 earned semester hours is the same for SSS participants and non-SSS participants who attended an open learning lab only.
Figure 2.2  A conceptual scheme for increased grade-point averages and college retention

- financial aid assistance
- career counseling assistance
- personal counseling
- workshops

Retention
Mentors
Group Interaction
Faculty Interaction
Personal Development

Grade Performance

Academic Success
Increased GPAs
2.0 on 4.0 scale

Freshmen to sophomore with 24 hours earned and sophomore to junior with 48 hours earned.

Student Characteristics
First-generation & Low-income

High school GPA and ACT Scores
18 and below
H₃: The proportion of sophomores being retained with 48 earned semester hours is not the same for SSS participants and non-SSS participants who attended an open learning lab only.
CHAPTER III:
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive array of services provided by Student Support Services at Southeastern Louisiana University as these services related to grade-point averages and retention rates. This chapter is organized into five sections. Section I provides a description of the population and sample. A description of the instruments for the study is found in Section II. Research Design, reliability and validity are described in Section III, and data collection is described in Section IV. In the final section of this chapter, data analysis procedures that are used for this study are presented.

Population

The target population consisted of high-risk students enrolled in institutions of higher education. The accessible population consisted of high-risk students enrolled at SLU. Students for this study were selected from high-risk freshmen and sophomores enrolled at Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) during the 1995-96 school year. The population selected in this study is typical of approximately 86 percent of the students enrolled at SLU. More specifically, over 86 percent of the entire SLU student population meet the high-risk classification by their low family income and first-generation status. Selected students, all of whom are SSS eligible, have scored 18 or below on the ACT.

Retention based on earned semester or credit hours is addressed in this study. Freshmen were considered retained if they had completed 24 semester hours in one academic
year (fall and spring); sophomores were considered retained if they had completed 48 semester hours.

Sample

The sampling plan for this study was the selection of an experimental and a control group from the accessible population at SLU. The experimental group was defined as freshmen and sophomore students that participated in the SSS program at SLU during the 1995 - 96 school year. The control group was defined as SSS eligible (first-generation and low-income) freshmen and sophomores who did not participate in the SSS program but attended an open-learning lab.

For this study, low-income status was defined as being from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level ($36,000 for a family of eight) established by the Bureau of the Census. First-generation college student status was defined as being an individual whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree. These guidelines were established by the U. S. Department of Education. Both groups’ participation in either lab was voluntary. Each group consisted of students who scored 18 and below on the ACT, and earned less than a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average in high school.

The experimental group services included workshops on financial aid (two per semester), academic test preparation and anxiety (two per semester), career planning and exploration, time management, personal, academic, financial aid and career counseling sessions (two per semester), study skills and self-esteem. SSS participants were also required to meet with each course’s professor once during the semester and to attend at least
one cultural event per semester. SSS participants received both scheduled and supplemental academic tutoring twice weekly. The students within the control group did not participate in the above activities and received only drop-in tutoring. Each SSS participant’s treatment was documented by the SSS counselors and kept in individual files. Participants in the control group logged their tutoring hours into the computer.

Forty-five freshmen and forty-five sophomores were selected for both the control and experimental groups for two reasons. Student Support Services is funded to serve only 250 students. Included in the 250 are freshman (100), sophomores (80), juniors (50) and seniors (20). Therefore, because of the limited number of freshmen and sophomores available in the experimental group an attempt was made to select a similar number of participants from the control group. Another reason for limiting the study to 45 freshman and sophomores was the number of times participants in both groups received tutoring services. Each SSS participant was required to attend at least two tutoring sessions per week equaling 32 sessions. Participants in the open learning lab had no scheduling requirements. Therefore, every effort was made to select open lab participants who had received an equal amount of tutoring hours as SSS participants.

Computerized records maintained by SLU served as the sampling frame for this study. The samples were matched on ACT scores, high school grade-point averages and first-generation and low-income classification. In addition, the number of times students in the control group attended the opened learning lab was matched with the number of times SSS participants attended tutoring sessions.
Although matching has its advantages and disadvantages, it was the sampling design used in this study. The matching variables were ACT scores and high school grade point averages. Matching was used to equate the control group and the experimental group on ACT scores, and high school grade-point averages. Both groups were also matched according to the number of times students received academic assistance. According to Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996, p. 387), there are several advantages to using matching as a measure of controlling research. A major advantage is that research data yielded from this study can be generalized to the larger population of SLU’s high-risk students. A second advantage in matching is the assurance that the samples being contrasted are similar with respect to other characteristics associated with the factors being studied (retention and grade-point averages). In addition, matching over 30 sets (45 sets in this study) tends to increase efficiency in the power of the test of significance as well as in the precision of the estimated degree of association. Perhaps the most noted advantages are its understandability and the relative simplicity of the analysis of the resulting data. A major disadvantage in matching is the practical difficulty of finding a matched control for each case when the number of cases is large. A second disadvantage is the costs and amount of time associated with finding matches and discarding subjects who could not be matched. Finally, although matching may yield greater precision than designs that do not control for sources of bias, it does not necessarily yield greater precision than other designs in which control is attempted.

**Data Sources**

In this study, I used archival data from SLU’s Office of Institutional Research and the SSS Database System. Freshmen and sophomore cumulative grade-point averages and
freshman and sophomore end of year retention rates were the dependent variables. The independent variable was participation in the SSS program. Freshmen and sophomore grade-point averages were defined as the student’s cumulative grade-point average covering all courses taken. The range is 0.0 to 4.0. Grade-point averages were obtained from the Office of Institutional Research. Freshman retention rates are derived from those beginning freshman who have remained continuously enrolled at the university and earned 24 semester hours and progressed to the sophomore level. Sophomore retention rates were derived from those second year students who remained continuously enrolled at the university and progressed to the junior level with 48 earned semester hours. These records were also obtained from the Office of Institutional Research.

In addition to the dependent and independent variables, the control variables in this study were composite scores on the ACT and high school grade point averages. ACT scores and high school grade point averages were taken from the University’s data and information system. ACT scores are used by colleges and universities to make admission decisions to the university. The measure is used primarily throughout the southern portion of the United States and is considered a valid and reliable predictor of student’s first and second years in college. High school grade-point averages have also been known to be predictors of college success. For the purpose of this study, ACT scores and high school grade-point averages were used to match students in the experimental and control groups.

Research Design

A Causal Comparative design along with Fisher Exact Test and the T-test were used for this study. According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996, p. 380), the Causal - Comparative
method explores cause and effect relationship between phenomenon. This quantitative research method sought to discover possible causes and effects of grade-point averages and retention rates of SSS participants by comparing the same variables with a control group of non-SSS participants. Non-SSS participants did not receive SSS comprehensive array of services.

There were major advantages in utilizing the Causal Comparative Method in this study. The major advantage of the Causal Comparative design was that it allowed the study of relationships between variables where experimental manipulation is often difficult as in this study. Variations in grade-point averages and retention rates were observed under conditions that did not involve any artificial arrangement, including manipulation by this researcher. A second advantage was that the two comparison groups were formed on the basis of a presumed causative factor (high-risk classification). The possible effects, low grade point averages and retention rates were then measured and analyzed. Comparisons were then made between the two groups on selected dependent variables in order to identify possible causes of the observed differences in grade-point averages and retention rates. In addition, the Causal - Comparative Method was highly useful for studying problems in education such as retention. A final advantage was that students in the study were volunteers, and as a result, may have had greater levels of motivation in their desire to graduate from the university.

One disadvantage of this design was the difficulty in establishing causality on the basis of collected data. The SSS participants' grade-point averages and retention rates could conceivably have been attributed to other variables such as professors who were better
skilled at disseminating knowledge. Students may have developed relationships with professors or may have made a decision to increase their study time or improve their study habits. Results may also be attributed to participants’ adjustment to the university or even that participants may have taken easier courses during a given academic year. Although both groups were possessed similar characteristics, the experimental group’s grade-point averages and retention rates could possibly have increased because of the Hawthorne Effect they received, and not necessarily because of services they were provided with. These variables made it possible that a third variable might have determined both the grade-point average and the retention rate.

There were other disadvantages of this study. This study is limited to freshmen and sophomores at a single university. Both of these two groups consisted of voluntary students who selectively chose to become SSS participants or attend the opened learning lab for tutoring sessions only. Students could have decided to drop out of either program at their own discretion. No reward such as credit hours or stipends was given to either group. Therefore, students’ own motivational levels were of utmost importance in their continuing in either program.

A two-tailed Fisher Exact Test was used to determine whether proportions were different in the retention rates of SSS and non-SSS freshmen and sophomores. This researcher used the T-test to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the means of SSS freshmen and non-SSS freshmen, and the means of SSS sophomores and non-SSS sophomores.
Data Collection

The participants in both the experimental group and the control group had similar characteristics. The time frame observed in the study was the 1995-96 academic year. Forty-five freshmen and 45 sophomore participants were selected from a pool of 250 SSS participants. These students were eligible for SSS according to their first-generation and low-income status, and have scored less than an 18 composite score on the ACT or less than an 18 in either English, Math or Science. The participants were required to attend at least two tutoring sessions per week as well as other aforestated requirements. The 45 freshmen and 45 sophomores in the control group were be selected from volunteers who chose to use the tutoring services provided by the opened learning lab. These participants were also required to have attended at least two tutoring sessions per week. These students were first-generation and low-income students who scored less than an 18 composite score on the ACT or less than an 18 in either English, Math or Science.

Analysis Strategy

The Fisher Exact Test is often used in cases where there is potential bias resulting from use of the Chi-Square Test. The probability of the 2x2 contingency table was tested at the .05 level. The T-test was used to determine the level of statistical significance of difference between the means of the grade-point averages of SSS experimental group and the non-SSS control group. The T-test was also based on a significance level of p <.05. Research questions and analyses strategies are noted on the following pages.
1. Are there statistically significant differences in the grade-point averages of freshman students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible freshman students who attended an open learning lab only?

   To address this research question I used the T-test with a significance level of $p < .05$.

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the grade-point averages of sophomore students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible sophomore students who attended an open learning lab only?

   To address this question, I used the T-test with a significance level of $p < .05$.

3. Are there statistically significant differences in the rates of retention of freshman students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible freshman students who attended an open learning lab only?

   To address this research question, I used the Fisher Two-tailed Test.

4. Are there statistically significant differences in the rates of retention of sophomore students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible sophomore students who attended an open learning lab only?

   To address this research question, I used the Fisher exact Two-tailed Test.

**Definition of Variables**

Variables were operationally defined for the purpose of this study. The dependent variables were retention rates and grade-point averages. The independent variable was the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS.
Dependent variables:

The dependent variables are retention and grade-point averages.

1. Retention of the following is defined as:
   a. freshmen—high-risk students who have completed 24 semester hours, and
   b. sophomores—high-risk students who have completed 48 semester hours.

2. Grade-point Averages—are the cumulative average grades of students as compiled by the SLU Office of Institutional Research and Records.
   a. freshmen—high-risk students who have earned a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, and
   b. sophomores—high-risk students who have earned a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.

Independent variables:

The comprehensive array of services provided by Student Support Services served as the only independent variable. Factors related to the independent variables included the following: counseling (personal, career, and financial aid and academic advising) and workshops (Study Skills, Building Self-Confidence, Test Anxiety and Time Management).
CHAPTER IV

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive array of services provided by Southeastern Louisiana University's (SLU) Student Support Services (SSS) as these services related to grade-point averages and retention rates. Subjects chosen for the study were high-risk students at SLU. For the purpose of this study high-risk was defined as students who were first-generation and low-income.

The results of the data analysis are reported in this chapter and are organized in six sections. Section one provides basic information regarding population, variables, matched samples and group statistics. Section two addresses research question one; section three addresses research question two; section four addresses research question three, and section five addresses research question four. Finally, a summary of the findings is discussed in section six.

Students were chosen from SSS freshmen and sophomore participants and from SSS eligible (high-risk) but non-participating students who attended an open learning lab. Forty-five students were chosen from each group resulting in 90 freshmen and 90 sophomore participants. The 45 SSS freshmen whose constituted the experimental group were matched on similar demographics as the 45 non-SSS freshmen. Sophomores were selected using the same matching procedure.

The comprehensive array of services (counseling, workshops and academic assistance) provided by SSS was the independent variable. Dependent variables included

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grade-point averages and retention rates. Increased GPA’s was determined by students having earned a minimum of a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale at the end of the 95-96 academic year. Freshmen retention was defined as 24 or greater earned semester hours at the end of the 95-96 academic year. Sophomore retention was defined as 48 or greater earned semester hours at the end of the 95-96 academic year.

Table 4.1 Freshman High School ACT Scores and GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error of Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.1111</td>
<td>3.1278</td>
<td>.4663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.3111</td>
<td>2.9911</td>
<td>.4459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.4844</td>
<td>.4627</td>
<td>6.897E-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.4178</td>
<td>.3956</td>
<td>5.897E-02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 revealed that the matched samples for freshmen, in addition to “high-risk” classification had similar characteristics based on ACT scores and high school grade-point averages. Using the correlated samples T-test (Table 4.2), there was no statistically significant difference in mean ACT scores for the two groups. Also, there was no statistically significant difference in high school grade point averages.

Summary statistics for the sophomore participants appear in Table 4.3. Results from correlated T-tests in (Table 4.4) indicate there was no significant difference in the ACT scores or high school grade point averages for the two groups.
Table 4.2  Freshmen T-Test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error of Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>dF</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT -0.2000</td>
<td>0.6451</td>
<td>-0.310</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA 6.667E-02</td>
<td>9.075E-02</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3  Sophomore High School ACT Scores and GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error of Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16.4667</td>
<td>1.6040</td>
<td>0.2391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soph. Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16.4444</td>
<td>1.5456</td>
<td>0.2304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soph. SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.7533</td>
<td>0.4026</td>
<td>6.002E-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soph. Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.6889</td>
<td>0.4097</td>
<td>6.107E-02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4  Sophomore T-test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error of Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>dF</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT .0223</td>
<td>0.3321</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA 6.667E-02</td>
<td>9.075E-02</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5  Freshmen GPAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.3467</td>
<td>0.8360</td>
<td>0.1246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.9453</td>
<td>0.5851</td>
<td>8.722E-02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 summarizes the two freshman student groups with respect to college grade point averages. The mean, standard deviation and standard error of the mean are reported in this table. The mean (2.3467) obtained for the freshmen SSS students grade-point averages of SSS was higher than the mean (1.9453) grade-point average of non-SSS students. To determine if the observed mean differences were statistically significant, the correlated samples t-test was used. These results are presented below.

Table 4.6  Sophomore Grade-point Average Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.6929</td>
<td>.6562</td>
<td>9.378E-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.2862</td>
<td>.4887</td>
<td>7.285E-02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7  Retention Rates of Freshmen and Sophomores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Retention</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not retained (&lt;24 hours for freshmen and &lt; 48 hours for sophomores)</td>
<td>Retained (&gt;24 hours for freshmen and &gt; 48 hours for sophomores)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen SSS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores SSS</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Statistics Results for Research Questions

Section 2: Research Question 1

To address the question, are there statistically significant differences in the grade-point average of freshman students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible freshmen students who attended an open learning lab?, the correlated samples t-test for equality of means was used.

Table 4.8 Freshmen T-test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error of Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>dF</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>4.687E-02</td>
<td>6.045E-02</td>
<td>.895</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlated samples T-test reveals a p-value of .010 using the two-tailed test; therefore, there is a significant difference in Freshman GPAs for the two groups.

Section 3: Research Question 2

To address the question, are there statistically significant differences in the grade-point averages of sophomore students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible sophomore students who attended an open learning lab?, the correlated samples T-test for equality of means was used.
Table 4.9  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error of Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>dF</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>6.245E-02</td>
<td>9.107E-02</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.434</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The T-test for equality of means (Table 4.9) revealed a significant difference, \((p= .001)\).

Section 4: Research Question 3

Findings for Research Question 3

Are there statistically significant differences in the rates of retention of freshmen students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible freshmen students who attend an open learning lab only?

Table 4.10  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Retained</th>
<th>Retained</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the McNemar test for the equality of proportions based on a matched pairs design (Anderson & Finn, 1996), the Z statistic obtained is 3.317. This value is statistically significant at the 0.01 probability level and indicates that the retention rates in the SSS group is higher than the retention rate in the non-SSS group.
Findings for Research Question 4

Are there statistically significant differences in the rates of retention of sophomore students at SLU who are enrolled in SSS as compared to SSS eligible sophomore students who attended an open learning lab?

Table 4.11 Sophomore Retention Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Retained</th>
<th>Retained</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSS</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SSS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the McNemar test for the equality of proportions with a matched pairs design (Anderson & Finn, 1996), the Z statistic obtained is 2.828. This value is statistically significant at the 0.01 probability level and indicates that the retention rates in the SSS group is higher than the retention rate in the non-SSS group.

Summary

In summary, there were significant differences in freshman GPAs, sophomore GPAs, freshman retention rates and sophomore retention rates. In every case the SSS groups outperformed the non-SSS groups.
CHAPTER V:
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Introduction

In addition to quantitative statistical procedures, various qualitative procedures were also included in the study. Achievement results for 1995-96 and 1996-97, and three case studies serve to further suggest that the services provided by Student Support Services do increase grade point averages and retention rates.

Southeastern Louisiana University is a historically white campus established in 1925. It is located approximately 40 miles from Baton Rouge and 50 miles from New Orleans. There are 14 feeder parishes to the university. Students are also attracted to SLU from various parts of the country. There are 15,320 students currently enrolled, and the racial composition is 92 percent white and 8 percent minority. African Americans constitute the largest percentage (7%) of minority students.

Southeastern Louisiana University offers an array of degree programs, both undergraduate and graduate in its four academic colleges. The university is one of the largest growing institutions in the state. Southeastern has an open admissions policy; therefore many students who do not meet selection criteria at other universities enroll.

The open admissions policy along with the dynamics of changes in students who are attending universities previously addressed in the literature promote a need for the university to offer support services to help students succeed. The Student Support Services Program (SSS) was developed at Southeastern Louisiana University in 1981 to help “at risk” students. The SSS Program at Southeastern primarily services low-income students, first generation

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students, and students with disabilities. An effort is also made to enroll students in the program who are from ethnic groups that are traditionally under-represented in educational attainment status. Most of the participants also receive some type of financial assistance. The services provided by the program include: tutoring, counseling, workshops, and cultural activities. The following data gives the information about the student participation regarding distribution by sex and eligibility.

Client Information:

Client Distribution By SexEthnic-Racial Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eligibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. First Generation</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Low-Income</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. First Generation/Low Income</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students With Disabilities</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who are classified as first generation and low income students represent the greatest population serviced through the SSS program. Seventy-five percent of the students serviced fall into the first generation/low-income category. Seventeen percent of the students
are first generation only. The racial composition of the participants may be more closely related to the racial composition of Southeastern Louisiana University than any other factors.

The SSS program at Southeastern has been exceeding or meeting its goals to increase retention and graduation rates of first generation and low-income students, as well as students with disabilities. The director and staff of the program have outlined three objectives to meet the goals. The following are the objectives:

(1) to assist students in attaining good academic standing (2.0 or greater on a 4.0 scale) through tutoring services, supplemental instruction, and accommodation of disabilities. Seventy-six percent of students will maintain a 2.0 or better grade point average,

(2) to assist students with personal, academic, and career needs through counseling services. Sixty-five percent of the total participants will increase academic success, self awareness, and realize that college life is less threatening and intimidating, and

(3) to promote academic and personal success through workshops. Sixty-five percent of workshop participants will increase interpersonal skills, personal skill development, study skills and time management as a result of various workshops.

The Student Support Services Program maintains a high accountability system for all participants in the program. In the 1995-96 and 1996-97 academic years, there was 100% participation in the reporting of tutees and participation in workshops and cultural activities.

At the end of each semester, Student Support Services participants complete cultural evaluations, mid-term evaluations and a final evaluation. The director compiles these records into a report on an annual basis along with the achievement statistics, including university standing and grade point averages.
The following is the 1995-1996 data:

**Achievement Statistics**

According to Figure 5.1, 86 percent of the students enrolled in Student Support Services have a 2.0 or better grade point average. Only 6 percent of the students have a poor academic standing.

![Figure 5.1: Achievement Statistics - 1995/1996](image-url)
In Figure 5.2, a total of 87.8 percent of the students agree or strongly agree that the various cultural activities (musicals, plays, multi-cultural luncheons, etc.) were culturally enriching. In addition, comments from students documented on the Mid-term Evaluation suggest that the cultural activity was beneficial to them.

![Figure 5.2 Evaluation of Cultural Activities](image)

Figure 5.2 Evaluation of Cultural Activities
Cultural Activity Comments 1995/1996

*very creative
*the artwork was very unique and beautiful
*something new and different
*it was a very enjoyable experience to see him (Captain Lovell)
*I really enjoyed Mr. Harry Watters Trombone solo on "Cherobee"
*My Children, My Africa was a great play!
*very nice show
*I enjoyed the play and found it very rewarding (My Children, My Africa)
*the art was interesting and somewhat strange
*my son and I attended, I believe he enjoyed it as much as I did. This was an enriching experience for both he and I.
*he was groovy and excellent
*it was set up nicely
*I had never been to an art exhibit and I loved this
*first time I attended an art show, impressed with fellow students work
*the art exhibit in the library was wonderful especially the one in memory of the sick and the deceased. Enjoyed it very much!
*very enriching experience
*waste of my time
*I would recommend this to everyone
*I prefer more of the older artists ie Monet

89
*I enjoyed it hope to do it again

*the art displayed in the library was very different and thought provoking

*author of book was very well spoken and had ideas and views which made me want to read the book. His ideas were many of the same things I believe are important to our society if we expect to go forward.

*very interesting and author was very open with thoughts and ideas of past and present

*the exhibit was enjoyable and the art students were dedicated and it showed

*truly gave me a different view on appreciating art

*I performed with the Angelo Luster/Shaun Mansuno quintet

*I enjoyed this because the company auditions local children to put the play on

*some shapes didn't make sense but I enjoyed them

*spiritually enriching

*different music always makes me happy

*the presentation was given by an African art instructor from SUNO

*art is good!

*it was well worth the time and money!

*I like art that looks like what it's supposed to be

*I feel this lecture gave me more insight about military life in the 1800's.

Figure 3 reveals that 71.4 percent of students reported that Student Support Services helped them meet their academic goals.
Figure 5.3 reveals that 71.4 percent of students reported that student support services always helped them meet their academic goals. Other students (15.7 percent) reported that SSS often and sometimes helped them meet their academic goals.
Students’ evaluations of SSS’s academic and career services are noted on Figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6. Ninety-one and one-half percent of students reported that the academic services provided to them were valuable, and 85.1 percent reported that the career services were valuable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>73.2%</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>67.2%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.4**

**Academic Services Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>56.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>13.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.5**

**Career Services Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>71.4%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.6**

**Personal Services Evaluation**

**Figure 5.7**

**Workshops Evaluation**
Figure 5.7 Shows the results of evaluation questions regarding personal services and workshops. Ninety percent of students stated that the personal services were valuable, and 86.9 percent of the students reported that the workshops helped them both academically and personally.

Results of data collected for the academic year 1996-1997 revealed similar statistics. Only grade point averages and academic standing are noted in Figure 5.8

* 36% have a GPA greater than 3.0
* 87% have a GPA greater than 2.0
* 17% are on the Dean’s List
* 92% were in good standing

Figure 5.8 Achievement Statistic 1996/1997

There are usually 16 workshops provided a semester. Workshop topics are chosen to disseminate information where students need additional assistance. The following are topics that have been included in the workshops: stress management, writing a research paper, resume writing, self-esteem building, test anxiety, career exploration, financial planning, substance abuse, and graphing calculators.

In 1996 and 1997, the data from the Student Support Services report that there was 100% achievement of goals and objectives. In addition to the previously cited data on the success rate of achievement (academic standing), cultural enrichment, and evaluations, 85.3
success rate of achievement (academic standing), cultural enrichment, and evaluations, 85.3 percent of the students are persistence toward graduation. The graduation rates for Student Support Services exceed graduation rates for the University.

**Case Studies of Former SSS Participants**

Three graduates of the SSS Program were interviewed, and the findings are reported in case studies. Student A (Rosa) earned a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education. Student B (Clarence) is presently enrolled in law school after earning an undergraduate degree from Southeastern Louisiana University. Student C (Yvette) is a graduating senior from Southeastern. All three students are from low-income families and are the first in their families to attend college (first generation college students).

**Student A (Rosa)**

Rosa became a mother at the age of 15. Completing high school became a struggle. Despite her additional responsibilities of being a mother, Rosa managed to graduate from high school three years later. She enrolled in Southeastern Louisiana University and completed her bachelors degree in Early Childhood Education in 1996. She is currently employed in the Ascension Parish School System as a kindergarten teacher.

Rosa made the following statement in an address to new SSS participants, “a math instructor referred me to Student Support Services after I continued to demonstrate nervous and anxiety tendencies in the classroom, and most especially during test taking times. Thereafter, the idea of actually receiving a college education became more of a reality and also more attainable. The most important feature of the SSS Program was that the professional counselors and staff believed that I could actually make it. Their belief in me was
greater than my belief in myself, and definitely greater than the beliefs of my immediate family.”

Born and raised in Punkerville, La., Rosa is the third of seven children. Neither of her parents finished high school. The family was also considered low income with its less than $22,000 annual income.

“Student Support Services is a program that has a ripple effect on family and friends because when they see others making it through and attaining an education, they realize they can do the same thing”, Rosa explained. “Student Support Services is a vehicle for success. Student Support Services changed my life”.

Student B (Clarence)

Clarence grew up in the housing projects of New Orleans, and entered the Student Support Services Program after a referral by the Dean of Student Life. Although Clarence’s cumulative grade point average was above 2.0, he considered dropping out of the university. Clarence is the second of four children raised by a single mother until her death when Clarence was 8 years old. His father was an already married Baptist preacher who never acknowledged his son. From the age of 8 until he was 17, Clarence was in and out of foster homes, and in trouble with the police. He says that he was a very angry person.

Clarence chose to attend Southeastern Louisiana University as a means of getting out of the city. While enrolled at the university, he was considered a loner. He had no friends and maintained only minimal contact with his other siblings who still lived in New Orleans.
One brother was incarcerated in New Orleans Parish Prison in the city. Clarence's sister, age 19 was at that time the mother of 3 children.

Clarence's inability to deal with his anger created problems for him with other students at the university. This fact was especially evident in his relationships with dorm mates. As a result, he was referred to Student Support Services by the Dean of Student Life who noted his academic potential.

Although the SSS staff worked tirelessly with Clarence, initially, he continued to remain negative and uncertain about his decision to remain at the university. He stated, “I think you have made a mistake by admitting me into the program.” This statement was soon to become obsolete, and later he remarked, “I was a kid who was continuously angry and did not know constructive ways of dealing with the anger I felt over my mother’s death and my father’s not owning me. I never dreamed I could succeed in college, nor in life after my unfortunate and sad beginning in life. I thought no one cared.”

Yet with help with his academic skills, encouragement and enhancement of his self worth, self-confidence and self-esteem, Clarence graduated from Southeastern Louisiana University and is currently enrolled in a law school in Memphis, Tennessee. He has distinguished himself as a leader and has a bright future as an attorney. His plans include a judgeship. He has become the first in his family to earn a college degree.

“Through the positive support, genuine caring, and career assistance that I received from the SSS staff, I have truly been able to rise above any levels I thought possible. The SSS staff encouraged me, and other students like me who had the desire to finish college, but lacked the support needed to remain at the university. I return to the university at every
opportunity to meet other SSS students, and encourage them to work hard, ask for help and reach for their dreams.”

Student C (Yvette)

“In the fall of 1992, I made a two mile journey to the Southeastern Louisiana University campus. Although, the campus was only two miles from where I lived, I call it a journey because I had never set a foot on that campus before. As a matter of fact, the people who lived in my community spoke of Southeastern Louisiana University as “the college.” The college did not have a reputation for being kind to Blacks. Therefore, I expected to meet opposition and face much prejudice.

As the first person in my family and in my neighborhood to attend college, I did not know what to expect, nor what was expected from me. I only knew that I wanted a better life than by family and friends had. I had no idea of what I wanted to major in. I thought I wanted to become a doctor, then a nurse, then a lawyer. I had no direction and received little assistance from the academic advisors at the college.

In addition, I had no friends at the college because the majority of the Black students in the community had gone to the two Black universities in the state. I felt alone and isolated. I felt that I had entered a strange world-a world that did not accept me.

Early in my first semester, a counselor from Student Support Services made a presentation in my English class. It appeared that she was talking directly to me. I decided to make an appointment with the counselor. The rest is history. Through the services provided by SSS (workshops, career and financial aid counseling, and academic advising), I was made aware of career options, test-taking strategies, time management and financial
aid advising. I was also paired with other students who like myself felt the loneliness of the university.

"Today, I am a senior in the Social Work field. I visit the Student Support Services Department often and offer my service as a means of giving back a portion of what was given to me. Without the warm environment of the SSS Lab and the support of the SSS staff, I may not have remained in the university".

Summary

"At risk" students (low income and first generation) are the target population addressed in the goals of the Student Support services Program at Southeastern Louisiana University. The client profile of students participating in the SSS Program is consistent with the goal; 100% of the population serviced is “at risk”. The individual cases of Students A, B, and C demonstrate that the program has experienced successful results. Students achieve academic success; they are retained at the university until a degree is earned.

The report compiled by the SSS program also support the findings of the individual case studies. Eighty-six percent of the students maintained a 2.0 or better; 87.8 percent of the students suggested that the cultural programs are enriching, and 71.4 percent of the students report that the program helped to meet their academic goals. In addition, the 1996 and 1997 data suggested that the graduation rates of students enrolled in the SSS Program exceeded the university’s. The students enrolled in Student Support Services are persistent toward graduation.
CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The final chapter of this study contains the summary, discussion and conclusions, and is organized into five major sections. A summary of the framework and methodology of this study are presented in section one. Section two contains a discussion of the interpretations of the major findings. Conclusions regarding the findings of this study are introduced in section three. Section four addresses implications for practice. Finally, recommendations for future research are offered in section five.

Summary of the Framework and Methodology

This study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive array of services provided by Southeastern Louisiana University's Student Support Services as these services relate to increased grade point averages and retention rates of first-generation and low-income students. Historically, only an elite group of students attended institutions of higher learning. However, with changes in educational demographics during the 1960's and beyond, it became necessary to make a college education accessible to a broader and more diverse population. Although tutoring and academic assistance have been provided to students enrolled in American colleges and universities since the 1930's, the low retention rate of at risk students continues to be high.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of Southeastern Louisiana University's Student Support Services, this study included a comparison of four groups of students (causal-comparative). Each group was composed of 45 students during the 1995-96 academic year.
SSS freshmen constituted the first group. The contemporary group consisted of non-SSS freshmen. Groups 3 and 4 included SSS sophomores and non-SSS sophomores. SSS participants were required to attend a minimal of 2 tutoring sessions weekly, workshops, career, financial and academic counseling sessions, and cultural activities. Non-SSS participants attended an open-learning lab only, and did not receive any auxiliary services. Both SSS and non-SSS participants were matched on their high school grade-point averages and their ACT scores. An attempt was made to also match both groups on the number of tutoring sessions each attended. Since 86 percent of SLU’s student enrollment consists of first-generation and low income students, matching students based on the “at risk” classification was conducted.

**Interpretation of Major Findings**

A series of T-tests including LeVerne’s Test for Equality of Variances and Fisher’s Exact Test were the statistical methods used to ascertain whether the dependent variables (retention rates and grade point averages) were associated with the independent variable, students’ participation in Student Support Service and therefore, contributed to students’ grade-point averages and retention rates. A T-test was used to determine if there were differences in SSS freshmen’s and non-SSS freshmen’s high school grade point averages and ACT scores. The T-test was also used to determine differences in SSS sophomores and non-SSS sophomores. Archival data was obtained from SLU’s Office of Institutional Research and the Student Support Services Database System.
Discussion of Results

The results of studies that examined tutoring programs and comprehensive retention programs are included in this study. Some findings indicate that tutoring alone has not been successful in increasing the grade point averages and retention rates of first-generation and low-income (at risk) students. Various research findings on comprehensive retention programs suggest that grade-point averages and retention rates are increased with the provision of holistic services.

This study provides evidence which suggests that the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS does contribute to increased grade-point averages (2.0 or greater on a 4.0 scale) and increased retention rates. The results of the T-test suggest that there were no significant differences between the high school grade point averages of SSS and non-SSS freshmen and sophomores. LaVerne’s F-test was used to determine if the two freshmen groups and the two sophomore groups had equal variances in the results of their GPA’s. A significant difference was noted between freshmen groups. Assuming equal variance for sophomores, the T-test for equality of means revealed a significant difference between these two groups.

The Fisher Exact Test was used to determine if there were significant differences in the retention rates of the four groups. Freshmen retention was defined as freshmen who earned 24 semester hours at the end of the 1995-96 academic year. Sophomore retention was defined as sophomores who earned 48 semester hours at the end of the 1995-96 academic year. There was a significant difference between the retention rates of SSS freshmen and non-SSS freshmen, and also between SSS sophomores and non-SSS sophomores. Therefore,
findings suggest that the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS such as academic, career and financial aid counseling, various workshops and tutoring contributed to students earning higher grade point averages and increased retention rates.

Qualitative results also suggest that the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS contributed to increased grade point average and retention rates. The data presented from students' evaluations of the various types of services suggest that being involved in cultural activities, workshops and counseling was helpful to them. Case studies of these former SSS participants further suggest that the services provided by SSS were instrumental in their being retained at the university. Previous studies have also shown that involvement in organized, holistic programs are of greater benefit than participation in a single tutoring component. The affiliation with an organized, inclusive program is associated with personal growth, more appropriate educational plans and career selections, decision making skills and financial management skills.

The quantitative and qualitative results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between the comprehensive array of services provided by SSS and increased grade-point averages and retention rates. This relationship makes a difference in the academic success of first generation and low income students. Findings from the WESTAT Study (1996), Chicago’s SSS Study (1992) and Tinto’s research (1987) compliment the findings of this study.

The generalizability of this study’s findings is enhanced because the accessible population is very similar to the target population on a number of variables. SLU’s statistics

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indicate that first generation and low income students comprise 86 percent of all students enrolled at the university.

Implications for Practice

The challenge confronting interested researchers, educators, administrators and policymakers is to identify and implement cogent variables and formulate strategies that will improve the educational support and therefore, outcomes of the “non-elite”, first generation and low income (at-risk) student. In seeking solutions to the plethora of problems confronting at risk students, it is helpful to review all pertinent literature, incorporate and integrate innovative strategies to compliment the existing diverse at risk population. Certainly, it would be counter-productive to offer financial assistance to programs that are designed to improve academic performances of at-risk students and not include provisions for addressing the multiplicity of problems associated with first generation and low-income students.

Academic professionals would be warranted in encouraging all faculty and staff to increase the quantity and quality of academic programs and non-academic programs available on their campuses. Students should be strongly encouraged and guided to become involved in a program of activities and/or organizations which includes a breadth and depth of structured, organized experiences that takes into account their holistic needs and interests.

Colleges and universities should strengthen opportunities for students and encourage faculty participation in organized activities. Administrators must work with counselors and advisors on pertinent topics. Activities and programs should be developed which encourage students to interact with people of differing backgrounds. Projects designed to promote
holistic awareness and understanding of at-risk students can be useful in this regard. It would also be important to increase the number of opportunities for interaction between students, faculty and staff.

Research must be an integral component if student development and successful practice are to become effective. The ideal goal of education for at-risk students should consist of realistic efforts to combine academic and non-academic support. Further, the association between participation in SSS and increased grade-point averages and retention rates that has been made in the present study suggest that services aimed at improving the persistence rates of first-generation and low income students should carefully examine methods to compensate for background factors.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Literature relating to first generation and low income students is limited in educational literature. Therefore, it would be helpful if this study were duplicated with other colleges and universities of differing sizes and geographic locations. In addition, there should be a follow up study conducted on the campus of Southeastern Louisiana University. More detailed investigations on the association between non-academic factors and grade point averages and retention rates are needed. Additional research inquiries are needed to determine additional methods of serving the at-risk population.

Perhaps, educators, administrators and policymakers should seek to contemplate combining their time, talents and resources to devise ways of effectively reducing and/or eliminating the non-academic-factors that contribute to high drop out rates and low grade-point averages in colleges and universities. It is incumbent upon us to provide as much
knowledge, support and assistance as possible to encourage successful college matriculation for all at-risk students.
REFERENCES


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Lion's Roar (1996 October 12) Characteristics of SLU Student Enrollment. Southeastern Louisiana University.


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APPENDIX A: DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

As Director of the Southeastern Louisiana University’s Student Support Services Project for the past seven years, I can attest to the quality of services provided to participants. This section labeled “Prior Experience” contains a detailed analysis of the “program’s accomplishments”, as well as a “summary of Accomplishments”. These two sections address the following:

the extent to which the project has served the number of participants it was funded to serve; the extent to which project participants were offered sufficient financial assistance to meet the participant’s full financial need; the extent to which project participants persisted toward completion of the academic program in which they are enrolled; the extent to which project participants met institutional academic performance levels required to stay in good standing at Southeastern Louisiana University; the extent to which Southeastern Louisiana University’s Student Support Services participants have achieved other goals and objectives as stated in the previously funded application; and the extent to which Student Support Services has met the administrative requirement including record keeping, reporting and financial accountability under the terms of the previously funded award.

As will be noted, all eleven objectives were met and/or exceeded in the previously funded grant. The Southeastern Louisiana University’s Student Support Services project has been and continues to be an integral part of the University and successful in its endeavor to increase the retention and graduation rates of first generation low income students as well as students with disabilities, and to foster an institutional climate supportive of the same.

Sincerely,

LaVanner S. Brown
Director
III. Prior Experience

The extent to which the project has served the number of participants it was funded to serve.

Southeastern Louisiana University’s Student Support Services Program was funded under the present cycle for the academic years 93 - 94, 94 - 95, 95 - 96 and 96 - 97. Each of these years participant numbers exceeded 250, the number the Program was funded to serve (see Table A.1).

Table A. Funded Number of Participants - 1993/94 - Fall, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Participants Funded</th>
<th>Number of Participants Actively Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 - 94</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 - 95</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 - 96</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '96</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Support Services Database System

In addition, the Program Director and Tutor Coordinator have a waiting list of sixty-four (64) students who have qualified for services. Participants were selected based on eligibility criteria from the U.S. Department of Education. These eligibility requirements include two thirds first generation and low-income and one third either low-income, first generation, students with disabilities (one third meeting low-income guidelines) and/or a combination of the three. Table A.2 below depicts the breakdown of eligibility criteria.
Table A.2  
Eligibility Criteria Breakdown - 1993/94 - 1996/97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of LI/FG</th>
<th># of LI only</th>
<th># of FG only</th>
<th># of students with disabilities</th>
<th># of LI and students with disabilities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993 - 94</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 - 95</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 - 96</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 - 97</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Support Services Database System

Although ethnicity was not a requirement for participation in the SSS Program, the Director and staff selected participants who represented groups that are traditionally underrepresented in educational attainment status. Participants are represented of their total enrollment of the University.

Table A.3  
Participant Breakdown by Ethnicity - 1993/94 - 1996/97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African Amer.</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Am. Ind/Alaskan &amp; Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993 - 94</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 - 95</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 - 96</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 - 97</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Support Services Database System

Table A.4  
Participant Breakdown by Gender - 1993/94 - 1996/97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993 - 94</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 - 95</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 - 96</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 - 97</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Support Services Database System

116
The extent to which project participants were offered sufficient financial assistance—grants-in-aid, tuition waivers and other forms of financial assistance to meet the participant’s full financial need attendance requirements at the grantee institution.

Each participant’s name was submitted to the Financial Aid Office prior to the beginning of the semester in order to assure that SSS participants would have first option at available funds. Types of financial assistance awarded included grants (Pell, SSIG, SEOG) and work study. Tuition waivers were awarded for those participants whose parents are employed at Southeastern. Loans were minimized because participants were able (with SSS staff assistance) to secure financial aid from previously stated sources. The SSS Director met continuously with the Financial Aid Director for further assurance of Financial Aid support for participants. Table A.5 notes Financial information. Participants who required financial assistance were offered full financial aid assistance as noted in Table A.5 below.

**Table A.5  Financial Aid Needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participants Who Required Financial Aid to Meet Financial Needs</th>
<th>Participants Who Received Full Financial Aid</th>
<th>Unmet Financial Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993 - 94</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 - 95</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 - 96</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 - 97</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Southeastern Louisiana University Office of Financial Aid

A total of six out of 594 students (1%) for the four year funded grant cycle were not offered full financial aid assistance to meet their needs. Academic and financial aid probation was the reason these students were not offered full financial aid assistance. However, these students were and will be awarded financial aid assistance after the one semester probation if their academic standing improves.
Graduation rates for Student Support Services participants exceeded graduation rates for the University. Southeastern Louisiana University has an open door admissions policy. This policy states that any student who has a GED or high school diploma may enroll at the university regardless of ACT scores. However, if the ACT score in Math, English or Science is less than an 18 or the ACT Composite score is less than an 18, the student must enter through the Developmental Education Program. A student can only earn a grade of “Pass” or “Unsatisfactory” (no course credit) while he/she is enrolled in Developmental Education. The average student spends approximately two semesters in the Developmental Education Program and research over the past five years reveals that an average of 30 percent of entering freshmen at the University are enrolled in Developmental Education.

Because the need for thirty percent of entering freshmen to enter the University through Developmental Education, the low-income levels of students, the first generation status, the severe needs of students with disabilities, and the influx of nontraditional students, the University’s Office of Institutional Research revealed that the average graduation rate for students at the University is six years.

Therefore, the projected graduation rate (35%) of the SSS Program that will graduate from the University has not been met. However, according to the Office of Institutional Research and the SSS Database, SSS participants graduate at a higher rate than the University’s graduation rate. For detailed persistence and graduation information, please note Tables A.6 below and A.7.
Table A.6  Persistence Toward Academic Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funded to Serve</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Financial Needs Met</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence Towards Graduation</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and Percent in Good Standing</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement of Other Goals and Objectives</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.7  Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Southeastern Louisiana University's Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Student Support Service's Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993 - 94</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 - 95</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 - 96</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Southeastern Louisiana University Office of Institutional Research/SSS Database

High retention of SSS participants as well as grade point averages indicate that the above SSS cohorts of students will graduate within six years at or above the projected SSS participant graduation rate of 35 percent.

The extent to which project participants met institutional academic performance levels required to stay in good standing at Southeastern Louisiana University.

For the three year grant funded periods for academic years 1993 - 1994, 1994 - 1995, 1995 - 1996, participants met institutional academic performance according to SSS objectives. These goals contributed to the goals of increasing retention and graduation rates of first generation, and low income students as well as students with disabilities and to
promoting an institutional climate of acceptance supportive of these same students. The objectives pertaining to these goals are shown in Table A.8.

Table A.8 Academic Performance Levels Attained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To assist students in attaining good academic standing (2.0 on 4.0 scale) through tutoring services, supplemental instruction, and accommodation for disabilities. 76% of students who receive tutoring will maintain a 2.0 or above.</td>
<td>The goal was exceeded. The average GPA was 2.45. 76% of participants maintained a 2.0 or above.</td>
<td>The average GPA was 2.62 and 83% of participants maintained a 2.0 or better.</td>
<td>The average GPA was 2.62 and 82% of participants maintained a 2.0 or better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assist students with personal, academic and career needs through counseling services. 65% of the total participants will increase academic success, self-awareness and realize college life is less threatening and intimidating.</td>
<td>82% or participants showed increased in their academics, self-awareness, and adaptation to college life. Goal was measured by mid-term and final evaluations</td>
<td>90% reported increase on final and mid-term evaluations in academics, self-awareness and adaptation to college life.</td>
<td>90% increase reported on final and mid-term evaluations in academics, self-awareness and adaptation to college life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continued)
To promote academic and personal success through workshops. 65% of workshop participants will increase interpersonal skills, personal development, study skills and time management as a result of various workshops.

74% of participants increased their skills and abilities acquired through workshops. Goals measured by workshop evaluations and through observations from counseling sessions and GPA.

86% of participants increased their skills and abilities both personal and academic. Goals measured by workshop evaluations and through observations from counseling sessions and GPA.

86% of participants achieved academic and personal growth. Goals measured by workshop evaluations and through observations from counseling sessions and GPA.

Source: Student Support Services Database System

The extent to which Southeastern Louisiana University SSS participants have achieved other goals and objectives as stated in the previously funded application or negotiated program plan.

The University’s SSS Program staff met and/or exceeded other objectives for the funded academic years of 1993 - 1994, 1994 - 1995, and 1995 - 1996. Please note the detailed evaluation in Table A.9.

Table A.9 Other Goals Achieved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To identify, select and enroll 250 project participants by the last week of August, January and June and maintain a level of 250 students throughout the project year.</td>
<td>264 participants were enrolled into the program.</td>
<td>256 participants were enrolled into the program.</td>
<td>259 participants were enrolled into the program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continued)

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To conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine the individual, academic, career, personal and social needs of participants. 100% of participants will receive an Individual Student Profile (ISP) for evaluation and assessing. 35% of participants will graduate.

An assessment was conducted on each participant. Graduation rate was 16%. Cohorts not measurable until 97 - 98.

Each participant received an Individual Student profile to determine his/her needs. Services administered accordingly. Graduation rate was 23% and exceeded the University rate of 22%. Cohorts not measurable until 97 - 98.

To establish a management system whereby students will be tracked and served according to their needs. 100% will be tracked according to their cohort group based on the semester and year they entered the program.

All students are tracked using the University mainframe and the SSS database.

All students are tracked using the University mainframe and the SSS database.

All students are tracked using the University mainframe and the SSS database.

(table continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Percentage of Improvement</th>
<th>Source: SSS Database System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide cultural awareness by increasing students exposure to fine arts, theater and diverse cultures. 60% of students will increase their cultural awareness and exposure to new and diverse cultures.</td>
<td>Responses on the cultural activity survey and on the assessment form revealed a 65% increase in participant’s cultural awareness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assist students with professional and graduate school options through counseling services. 95% of the graduating seniors who participate in the project will receive graduate or professional school counseling. Of those seniors participating in the program, 15% will attend graduate or professional school.</td>
<td>100% of graduating seniors received professional and graduate school counseling. 20% of graduates continued to graduate school. Goal was exceeded.</td>
<td>100% of graduating seniors received professional and graduate school counseling. 18% of graduates continued to graduate school. Goal was exceeded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote campus and community awareness, acceptance, and support of issue and concerns facing first generation, low income students, students with disabilities and nontraditional students. 100% of the staff will be involved in campus activities and serve on committees. 40% of participants will be involved in campus activities.</td>
<td>67% of SSS participants also participated in various campus activities. All staff served on a variety of committees.</td>
<td>65% of SSS participants also participated in various campus activities. All staff served on a variety of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SSS Database System

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As is evidenced by evaluation measures stated in the previous chart, all objectives were met and/or exceeded. Further charts and graphs that depict all of the objectives, instrumentation and outcomes for each of the objectives are noted on the following pages in Tables .10 and A.11.

Table A.10  Summary of Accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funded to Serve</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Financial Needs Met</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence Towards Graduation</td>
<td>243/86.4%</td>
<td>239/93.4%</td>
<td>221/85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and Percent in Good Standing</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement of Other Goals and Objectives</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Requirements Met (including 2/3 - 1/3 requirement) - see attached</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Keeping</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Accountability</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: EVALUATION FORMS

Student Support Services
Cultural Activity Form

Name_____________________________Social Security #____________________
Name of Cultural Activity _________________________ Location________________
Semester: SU FALL SPR 19__________Month Attended__________________________

Directions: Please express your reactions to the cultural activity you attended by circling the appropriate responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. This experience was culturally enriching. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
2. This activity exposed me to new and diverse cultures. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
3. This activity was an enjoyable experience. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
4. I look forward to attending a similar activity. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

5. Comments ________________________________________________________________

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Academic Center for Excellence
Student Support Services
Final Evaluation
Purpose: Evaluate program and Tutors

Your Name ________________________________
Soc. Sec. Number ____________________________

Please circle the appropriate semester:
Fall  Spring  Summer  19________

Please take a moment to respond to the following. Your comments are appreciated and will be held in confidence.

always often neutral sometimes never

1. The Academic Counseling services were valuable to me:
   5  4  3  2  1

2. The Career Counseling services were valuable to me:
   5  4  3  2  1

3. The Personal Counseling services were valuable to me:
   5  4  3  2  1

4. The workshops helped me to succeed academically and:
   or added to my personal growth:
   5  4  3  2  1

5. The Program has helped me to meet my academic goals:
   5  4  3  2  1

6. The Mentoring services were beneficial in my adjustment to the university:
   5  4  3  2  1

   Strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree

5. Tutoring services enabled me to earn higher grades:
   5  4  3  2  1

8. Considering the program as a whole, these services were valuable:
   5  4  3  2  1

9. Would you recommend that Student Support Services rehire your tutor(s)
   yes  no

name ________________________________
comments ________________________________
10. Would you recommend that Student Support Services reuse your mentor?  
   
   Name_____________________________  
   Comments_________________________  

11. What campus/community organizations and committees did you participate in this semester? (Fraternities/Sororities, student government, clubs, honor societies, etc.)  
   
   ___________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________  

12. What educational or cultural activities did you participate in or attend this semester?  
   Art Exhibit     Literature Presentation     Local Festival  
   Musical Presentation     Theatre Presentation  
   Other_____________________________  

Below is a checklist which can help us analyze your progress in study skills, academic competence and personal issues. Please circle the appropriate responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. My time is unwisely distributed. I spend too much time on some things and not on others.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My periods of study are interrupted by outside interference such as telephone calls, visitors, and distracting noises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I miss important points in the lecture while copying down notes on something that has gone before.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I try to carry over facts learned in one course into other courses.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I get nervous on exams: blank-out, panic, feel nauseated.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I feel concerned about my major.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I experience stress related to school.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I am comfortable around other people.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I am confused about career decisions.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I attend cultural activities.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I am exposed to a variety of cultural events.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I have trouble filling out the financial aid application.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I feel that I am familiar with all the available types of financial aid.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26. How could we better meet your needs as a student?

27. Do you plan to attend SLU next semester?  
   Fall   Spring   Summer

   If yes, what services will you need? If tutoring will be needed please list course and number. ____________________________________________________________________________________________

   If no, do you plan to: ______ transfer ______ withdraw ______ graduate

   If your address or phone number has changed, please write it so that we can still reach you.

Student Support Services
Workshop Evaluation

Workshop Title: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

Presenter: ______________________________________

Please express your immediate reaction to this workshop by circling the appropriate number.

1. Content of material was related to the topic.  
   Excellent 5  Good 4  Neutral 3  Fair 2  Poor 1

2. Materials were organized.  
   Excellent 5  Good 4  Neutral 3  Fair 2  Poor 1

3. Information was useful.  
   Excellent 5  Good 4  Neutral 3  Fair 2  Poor 1

4. Materials were enhanced by handouts and/or audio visuals.  
   Excellent 5  Good 4  Neutral 3  Fair 2  Poor 1

5. Speaker(s) had knowledge of the materials.  
   Excellent 5  Good 4  Neutral 3  Fair 2  Poor 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Speaker/s were effective in presenting the material.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Speaker/s welcomed audience participation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Length of time was sufficient for each subtopic.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Facilities were accessible to total population.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Overall rating of the workshop</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:                                                                                           
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
LaVanner Showers Brown was born in Oma, Mississippi. She is the second of ten children born to Mr. Nathaniel and Mrs. Arlena Maye Showers. She grew up in Livingston Parish and graduated from West Livingston High School in Denham Springs, Louisiana. La Vanner moved to Lufkin, Texas, and completed a Bachelor in Social Work in 1986 and a Master in Education (Guidance and Counseling) in 1987 at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacodoches, Texas. She is Director of Student Enhancement Services at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana where she has been employed since 1988.

LaVanner's quest to further her education was conducive to her entering the Educational Administration Doctoral Program in 1992 (renamed Educational Leadership, Research and Counseling).

During the years between 1992 and 1998, La Vanner continued to work toward the doctorate degree, maintained employment at Southeastern, and remained actively involved in the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church (MPBC), and other community, and educational organizations. She is the teacher for the MPBC Home and Foreign Mission Society and a board member for the Hammond United Way, Private Industrial Council, Tangipahoa Economic Development, and Hammond Restoration Committee. La Vanner was elected to a four-year term to the Hammond City Council in 1994, and has served as President, and Vice-President of the council. Her educational associations include: Louisiana Association of Student Assistance Programs (President, 1995-96), Southwest
Association of Student Assistance Programs (Treasurer-1998), and Faculty Trainer for the National Council of Educational Programs (1997 and 1998).

LaVanner resides in Hammond, Louisiana with her husband, Pastor Samuel C. Brown. She has four children- Sherlyn, Danille, Pamela, and Jay.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: LaVanner Showers Brown

Major Field: Educational Leadership, Research & Counseling

Title of Dissertation: An Evaluation of Student Support Services at Southeastern Louisiana University

Approved:

[Signatures]

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination: June 12, 1998