STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF STUDENT SERVICES AT A FOR PROFIT 2-YEAR COLLEGE

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF STUDENT SERVICES AT A FOR
PROFIT 2-YEAR COLLEGE

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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative/quantitative combination study was designed to ascertain from students what aspect(s) of student services offered at their institution made it an effective or non-effective tool. Student services are known to contribute to persistence and student success for 2-year college students. Obtaining information from students on what they find to be most effective in any given student service is the key to creating or refining student services to best fulfill the goal of student academic success. Although many quantitative studies have been conducted to verify the effectiveness of student services, few studies interview students for a qualitative input. This study was conducted at a small, mid-western, for-profit 2-year college. A background questionnaire was conducted along with a focus group session with selected students. The result of the questionnaire found students perceive student services as vital to their success, yet the majority did not utilize the services. The most utilized service was Educational Funding. The focus group was unanimous in consideration of teachers as the most valuable student service.

Keywords: student services, persistence, success, 2-year college
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Research is plentiful regarding the need for student services to aid in the success of the 2-year or 4-year college student (Mattox, & Craemer, n.d.; Kennett, & Reed, 2009; Brock, 2010; Waycaster, 2001). Mattox and Craemer (n.d.) suggest that "services to students have been appreciably expanded" in community colleges over the past 30 years (p.13). Student services encompasses a wide range of areas including financial aid application assistance, course registration assistance, health clinics, mentoring services, admissions guidance and extra-curricular activities, to name a few (Mattox, & Craemer, n.d.; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010).

Although history has shown differences in the mission, goals, students, governance, etc. of junior colleges, community colleges, technical colleges and the two-year college, they are now mostly considered as "having a commonality" (Ratcliff, Schwarz, & Ebbers, 1994, xvi). “Two-year colleges” is a term commonly used to include junior colleges, community colleges, technical training schools, whether private or public, for-profit, or non-profit institutions. Four-year colleges may offer a wider range of extra-curricular, academic clubs, and social activities, but most every two- or four-year college offers at least the basic student services such as an admissions department,
financial aid office, registration, some form of remediation assistance and, hopefully, a level of life management skills enhancement.

Research literature supports the belief that student services provide the function of enhancing the academic success of the college student (Boroch, Hope, Smith, Gabriner, Mery, Johnstone, & Asera, 2010). Success is a term that has different meanings in different studies and contexts. Brock (2010) describes student success as "persistence and degree attainment" (p. 110). Boroch et al. (2010) measure student success in various ways including: "...course success, course retention, success in subsequent courses, program persistence progression through sequential levels of developmental courses, progression to college-level courses and...grade point average" (p. 2). Student success for the purpose of this paper is defined as persistence toward completion of the program the student started in by continuing on in successive courses, with the goal of a certificate, diploma, or associates degree.

Research has been conducted regarding the effectiveness of a student success course for incoming first-year students, or those that are in need of remediation (Center, 2010). Studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of student mentoring, learning resourcefulness skills (Kennett & Reed, 2009), encouraging student engagement (DiMaria, 2006), using motivational techniques (Solberg Nes, Evans, & Segerstrom, 2009), and early assessment strategies (van Schalkwyk, 2010) among others. The research includes comparison studies, data comparisons, and surveys of faculty, staff and administration as well as students, using short term and longitudinal data. Although these studies mentioned that student services may be of benefit to some degree, it is important to ask what the students' perceptions are of the student services available to them.
Another question is what is lacking in the research from the point of view of students regarding the effectiveness of student services toward student success (Sorey & Duggan, 2008; VanNote Chism & Banta, 2007). Due to the variety of students and their individual circumstances and needs, there may a wide range of perceived values, but there is a need for research to determine whether or not there is a theme, among college students, regarding what determines an effective student service.

Research studies determining the effectiveness of student services have taken place in large and small 4-year universities as well as in 2-year colleges both in the U.S. and abroad (Miller & Mupinga, 2006; Herbert, 2007; Kennett & Reed, 2009). However, information from for-profit institutions is limited. Because these for-profit colleges are solely-owned and private, access to this population has been a challenge. For-profit colleges have not been required to provide the levels of disclosure that other schools have been doing for many years: at least not until recently. With the implementation of the “gainful employment” regulations, institutions that accept federal student financial aid must now disclose their rates of graduation, levels of graduate employment, numbers of students that drop out of the programs, and the level of defaults on federal loans (Department of Education, 2011). For-profit 2-year colleges have been especially hard hit by these regulations as they typically have higher tuition rates, creating higher loans that the graduate (or a non-completer) must pay back. Colleges must show that the student is able to find employment in a field related to the program they graduated from, and be able to pay back the loans at a defined rate. Figure 1 shows the rate at which the student would be required to pay back a loan depending on the loan size. They then should be employed in a program related job field with earnings enough to make the payments and
avoid default. This is called the debt-to-earnings ratio. The debt-to-earnings ratio must be below 12% of a yearly income or 30% of discretionary income.

Figure 1.

Allowable debt levels by earnings

Chart 2: Allowable Debt Levels by Earnings (Areas under the lines represent permissible typical debt burdens)

Note: Chart 2 and Table C show the debt levels allowed according to the student's income that would still allow for repayment of loan debt and avoid loan default. Source: Federal Register - http://federalregister.gov/a/2011-13905

It becomes imperative to ensure that students are graduating and securing jobs in a program related field. It has become essential to supply the government with statistical
data that shows program effectiveness, retention, and graduation of students. Ensuring retention of students and program completion has brought the value of effective student services to the attention of administration and faculty.

Statement of Problem

Student success in the context of this proposal is defined as the ability of the student to persist in their educational pursuit toward the completion of their program. This could be as a full-time or part-time student. Programs may result in a diploma, certificate, or an Associate's degree. Although the ultimate goal of many students is job acquisition, dropping out of the program for the purpose of working at a job would not constitute student success for the purpose of this study.

An "effective" student service would be one that aids the student in their pursuit of success. This assumes the student would seek out the appropriate service when needed and that the service was offered in the institution that the student attends. Knowing what the student deems necessary to their own success is the key to providing the appropriate offerings. Previous studies were motivated by the desire to determine how beneficial the available student services were to the success of the student. What needs to be determined is the student perspective of what is beneficial and effective for their success.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

1. Which student services are the most effective or least effective for student success from the perspective of the for-profit 2-year college student?
2. What reasons do for-profit 2-year college students give for the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of any given student service?
Operational Definitions

Student success in the context of this study is defined as the ability of the student to persist in their educational pursuit toward the completion of their program certificate, diploma, or associate degree. This includes full-time and part-time students, online, and on-ground students. An effective student service would be one that aids the student in their pursuit of success as defined above. Student services are those programs or opportunities designed to help the student toward success. These may include, but are not limited to, academic advising, financial aid assistance, registration assistance, mentoring, study labs, library help, career services help, life management counseling, etc.

Significance of study

Retention of students is a large issue in today's 2-year colleges which must comply with government regulations as outlined in the Rules and Regulations put forth by the Department of Education (2011). These rules specifically target for-profit institutions and require evidence that the programs offered are able to assist the student in obtaining gainful-employment in a "recognized occupation" (Department, 2011, p. 34,387), and ensure that "student debt is at appropriate levels" (p. 34,386) to allow repayment of federal loans. The Department of Education notes that students attending a for-profit college "on average assume more debt to enroll in a program than do their peers who attend public or private, nonprofit institutions" (2011, p. 34,386). Retention of the students to the completion of their program will enable 2-year colleges to continue offering the programs by showing acceptable graduation rates and job acquisition, enabling loan repayments. Currently, the 2009 two-year cohort default rate (the latest statistics available on this school's website) of all postsecondary institutions is at 8.8%,
all proprietary institutions is at 15%, and the school in this study is estimated at a 9.7% level of defaults (school website).

Society also benefits from the success of the student who seeks to improve his/her socioeconomic standard by attaining gainful employment and "becom[ing] educated, productive, contributing citizens" (Crisp, 2011, p. G6) and "mak[ing] it less likely for individuals to be publicly dependent" (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010, p. 3). Most importantly, it is the ethical concern of all educators to provide the best opportunity possible to aid in the progress of students who are willing to learn, in which case educators should listen to what the student has to say. Government bodies and legislation are more often mandating student services (Mattox & Creamer, nd.). Brock (2010) identifies three areas that need addressing for reform: "remedial education, student support services, and financial aid" (p.109). Waycaster (2001) designates remediation as a "core function" for colleges and as an "investment for society" (p. 403). The institutions that would benefit the most from help in these areas are 2-year colleges who provide the "the greatest access to nontraditional and underprepared students" (Brock, 2010, p.109). For-profit colleges cater to those poor, higher-risk, underprepared, working-class students who may not otherwise be able to get a higher education (Nocera, 2011; de Vise, 2011). For-profit institutions offer convenient class times, online classes, and tuition assistance.

Rationality of Study

Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for this study will enable gathering of background information on the study participants and also gather in-depth emic perceptions of what constitutes effective student services. By finding out from
the students themselves, what student services are beneficial and why, it is possible to refine the services available and provide an even greater opportunity for increasing the retention and success rate of 2-year, for-profit, college students.

Setting of Study

The setting for the study was at a small, for-profit, family owned, university, located in the Midwest. The school is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, governed by the State Board of Regents and has specialized program accreditations in Nursing and Medical Assisting, with the accreditation in process for Dental Assisting and Medical Laboratory Technicians. The school is a university offering Bachelor and Masters degrees online or as a hybrid program with a mix of online and face-to-face learning environments. The students that are in face-to-face classes, are mainly pursuing technical associate degrees and certificates, which shows that the school operates in this setting as a career school. A listing of certificate, diploma and associate degree programs offered through this institution are listed in Appendix A along with the number of students in each program.

The school's student population at the middle of December 2011 was 582. The graduation and completion rate for the 2004 matriculating cohort was 42% (the latest statistics from this school's data banks).

The students at this school are mainly of a lower socioeconomic level as determined by the fact that almost 90% use some type of federal aid. They are mostly female, racially diverse, and divided quite evenly between those with a high school education and those with some college experience (See Figure 2).
Sixty-five percent of the students in the school are pursuing an Associate's degree or a diploma in a healthcare based program, about 17% of the students are in a business related program, and 6% in a computer networking program, leaving about 12% in a mainly on-line bachelor degree pursuit. Figure 3 shows the distribution of students in the major program types.

The school in the study offers several student services. The Admissions Department consists of five admission representatives who are the first people the student sees when seeking admission. The admission representatives interview the students for
interest areas and help guide them to an area in which they can be successful. Prospective students are given the Wonderlik entrance exam, a Math and English comprehension inventory which, when scored, will determine whether they are able to be admitted and what, if any, remediation is necessary. They may be required to take a non-credit student success course depending on this score, or can take it voluntarily. Admission representatives are also in the position of helping students switch programs if desired, coordinating this process with the Registrar and the Educational Funding Department.

The Educational Funding Department has three representatives who help the students determine what funds they are allowed to apply for and what the repayment requirements will be. They counsel the students regarding the debt they may encounter and how to keep the level as low as possible. The service of helping the students fill out the forms and submit the correct information is handled in this department also. Reminders are sent via in-school e-mail, from this office, regarding paperwork needed such as FAFSA forms, as well as the offer to help the student with this process. They may counsel the students regarding finances through-out the student's program as life circumstances may change or courses are altered through repeated courses, failed courses, academic probation, program changes, or changes in scheduling.

The Academic Registrar Department has two personnel working on the scheduling of all students. All schedules are pre-set for at least one semester and usually two semesters, by the registrar due to the specific program requirements. The Registrar Department co-ordinates the program core courses with any general education courses the students may need. Students have the opportunity at any point to request changes or alterations to the schedule from the Registrar's office, although there are specific time
frames for switches to occur. The Registrar office works with the Educational Funding Department, Admissions and the Student Services Department to arrange program changes or within-program adjustments. This office tracks students that are on academic probation, lacking in attendance, and those dropped for any variety of reasons. This tracking is provided to the Department Chairs on a weekly basis.

There is a Student Service Department with one person who handles absenteeism issues, life management issues, and students on academic probation. This staff member works with the faculty, Registration, Admissions, and Educational Funding to assist the students that are danger of failing or being dropped from the enrollment rolls. This department is able to assist students with housing, day-care, disability, and personal issues that may be affecting the ability of the student to maintain successful program requirements. Outside sources are investigated and involved when needed to provide the necessary services on an individual basis. Information on students needing help for any reason is provided to the Student Services department through a systematic protocol coming from the faculty and/or the Department Chairs. The Student Services department tries to talk to most every class at least once a term to share the department's services and hours of operation.

The Career Services Department has two personnel responsible for assisting the students with interviewing techniques, networking, social media use in job acquisition, or job acquisition in general. They aid students in producing and maintaining current résumés for use when job searching. Career Services is responsible for the data relating the job acquisition rates of graduates so is very active in finding positions in program related fields for them. Another service provided, comes from the librarian who is
available for help for research projects, citation and formatting issues, certain testing, nametags, and information literature lectures. The bookstore has one staff member who orders, disperses and coordinates the book loan system. This person also is available to help students with APA formatting issues or other Microsoft Word formatting technicalities. The receptionist handles all incoming calls and directs students and guests to the proper departments as needed. The Internet Technology Department (IT) consists of one full-time staff member and one or two work-studies. They are available to students for installation of low cost software, laptop problems, Blackboard or portal access and initial password set-up.

The Academic Dean handles complaints that have followed the chain of command to her attention. The Dean is in charge of retention strategies. The Dean follows the progress of every student through weekly reports from Department Chairs, Educational Funding, Student Services and the Registrar Department. Labs available to the students include math tutoring, formatting and citation assistance, writing labs, program specific labs such as an open dental assisting lab, and computer use. CPR certification is available to all students at no charge and is taught by trained faculty. The dental clinic operates as a training opportunity for the dental assistants but offers basic services to all students at a discount. The faculty, curriculum and assessments, Registrar, Student Services, Library, IT, Bookstore departments, as well as re-entry requests, tutoring, mentoring and all labs and the dental clinic staff are under the authority of the Academic Dean.

The last resource for students with complaints at this school is at the Campus President's office. The President has the ultimate authority over conduct, ethical and legal
issues, and appeals for re-admission. The Admissions, Education Funding, Career Services Departments, dental clinic business components, and the receptionist are under the authority of the Campus President.

All students also have access to the campus-wide system of Blackboard in which they have electronic access to "Help" modules for things such as writing skills, résumé building etc. Communication with other students, teachers and the administration can take place through Blackboard or the school provided Outlook accounts. School announcements and information regarding the college catalog, student services, complaints regarding ethical concerns, student handbook, grades, assignments, and semester schedules are all found on Blackboard or in the student's portal access. Students can request or may be required to participate in an externship as a component of their skill practice and assessment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study is to add to the research literature that is available on the topic of effective student services for students in a 2-year for-profit college. This study enhances the knowledge of what the student perceives as the most effective student services in regard to their educational success. The value to the college is insight for what students perceive as effective to their academic success. The college involved in the study, as well as the community it serves, receives a benefit from the insights gained regarding the perspective of the student. These insights can serve to encourage necessary changes in the areas of the student services, providing an enhanced level of service to students. This increases the levels of success for the students, resulting in higher retention, graduation, and subsequently employment rates.
Study Delimiters

This study was delimited to students at a private, for-profit, 2-year, career college with an enrollment of approximately 500, and located in the Midwest. Students in the study were current students and attended classes for at least 4 months.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of related literature that contributed to the background for the development of this study. Various sources of literature relating to 2-year colleges, for-profit colleges, student success, and student services were reviewed. Relevant information was taken from professional journals, dissertations, books, and internet websites. Several pertinent research studies are related here, with their focus on the effect of student services from the perspectives of students, faculty and administration in 2-year colleges.

The following topics are covered: current research and practice relating to the topic of student success, rationale for this study's design, this study's context, researcher qualifications, and student demographics at this school.

Current Research and Practice

Several studies using qualitative methods have been conducted on the topic of student services effectiveness (Nitecki, 2011; O'Gara, Karp & Hughes, 2009; Anthony, 2003; Sorey & Duggan 2008). Nitecki (2011) conducted a case study using a qualitative method at a large, urban, community college located in the northeastern United States
Although the overall college graduation rate was very low (12.5%), two of the programs offered at the college showed a much higher graduation rate. The programs included in the study were a paralegal program, with a 32.2% graduation rate, and an early childhood development program, which had a 51.3% graduation rate. These programs were compared against the third group of a sampling of the rest of the programs offered at this institution. The study utilized a personal interviewing process on 13 faculty and 21 students from the three separate programs over a 10 month period. The study participants were a random sampling of an accessible population of 350 Early Childhood Program students and 200 Paralegal Program students. In addition to the interviews, classroom observations focusing on faculty-student interactions were conducted in classes the interviewed faculty taught during the same time period. The Paralegal Program was deemed successful due to being a "small, tight-knit program that stressed excellence and professionalism" (Nitecki, 2011, p. 106). The program instituted its own level of student services apart from the institutional level, providing program specific mentoring, internships, and advisement among other services. The Early Childhood Development Program was also a small, close-knit program. The faculty fostered a sense of family with their personal interest in the students and their willingness to address the concerns the students faced, even family and life issues. This program also had its own subcommittee organization of program specific student services in the areas of advisement, externship acquisition, and job readiness experiences. It was found that these two programs at the college exhibited higher graduation and success rates than other programs offered there.

A study done by Mattox and Creamer (n.d.) used a questionnaire to obtain the emic perspective of the faculty in a 2-year college regarding student services. The
O'Gara, Karp, and Hughes (2009) conducted a qualitative study of how institutional student services affect student persistence, with a special interest in the student success course. The study participants were students from two separate urban community colleges located in the northeastern United States. One hundred seventy six students were randomly selected from the entire accessible list of all first-time enrolled students who had persisted into their second semester, excluding those with previous degrees, continuing education students and non-program students. Persistence refers to the student carrying on with their studies from one semester to the next, culminating in program completion. Those 176 students were invited to participate in the study and 44 students made up the sample population. Two interviews were conducted with each student in the fall and summer, with 36 students available for the second interview. The interviews focused on the student's use of student services, concentrating on the student success course. The student success course included topics ranging from study skill development to campus tours to group projects. One of the community colleges used in the study did not require students to take the student success course to graduate, although
all full-time students were automatically registered for it in their first semester. Part-time students often did not take it although their advisors encouraged them to take the course. The second college required the course for graduation but it was not mandatory for the first semester. Analysis of the data taken from the transcribed interviews showed that the students who participated in the student success course "generally found the course to be beneficial in a variety of ways" (O'Gara, et al., 2009, p. 7). It was also found that although students knew of the student services available to them; they did not always seek them out when help was needed. The authors stated that it is unclear why the students do not make use of the services, and suggested further research in this area.

A dissertation by Anthony (2003) describes the use of a qualitative study of 10 students at Bessemer State Technical College. It describes the students' perceptions, feelings and thoughts regarding the student development services they utilized during their educational experience at the college and how this related to their success. The sample consisted of 10 graduated students chosen through purposeful selection according to a specific list of criteria. Participants needed to meet four criteria out of a list of nine such as being a graduate with successful employment, having utilized the Student Support Services, having received counseling, among others. Each participant participated in an initial interview and a follow-up interview. After data analysis was completed the author identified 6 major themes: respect for students, genuine care and concern for students, holistic approach to addressing student needs, professionalism, teamwork, and a foundation for career success. Although interesting, none of these are a specific student service; rather these are components of the services offered that made them attractive to use and of benefit to the students.
Sorey and Duggan (2008) used a quantitative method to study the differences in retention rates between traditional-aged and adult students by determining what predicts successful completion of the program for each group. The researchers conducted their study on students enrolled at a large multi-campus public community college located in southeastern United States. From the accessible population of 34,900 students, random sampling was done to come up with a sample population of 350 traditional-aged students (18-24 years of age) and 350 adult students (age 25 and older) who were degree-seeking and first time students. The actual overall response rate was 17.6%. Questionnaires were sent to the sample populations to measure the major constructs to be studied, which included institutional commitment, encouragement and support from significant others, social integration, and other topics. Background data was also gathered regarding certain demographic information and student enrollment characteristics. The survey was based on a number of respected retention research models. Among other items of interest, it was found that traditional-aged students benefitted greatly from the support given them by significant others. Incorporating family and friends into the college experience, then, may be a student service that would enhance the retention of students. Adult learners also benefitted from this type of support but not to such a great degree. A second conclusion was that adult-learners have a much more complex set of variables that influence their ability to persist to program completion. Adult-learners may have additional obligations with family or work. They may also learn more slowly or need more repetition. The authors felt that the most significant finding in this study is that predicting institutional persistence varies greatly between the two age groups.
The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) has performed studies for the last decade which have involved various 2-year colleges in an effort to increase the number of students who will persist in their education to achieve the goal of program completion (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010). One of the goals for this year's report was to examine the "purposeful interactions that occur between students and student services professionals" (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010, p. 2). Quantitative data gathering was done through the use of a questionnaire provided to selected entering students, another to more experienced students, and a third questionnaire for faculty members in an effort to identify what teaching and learning practices are effective in improving student success. Qualitative data was gathered through the Initiative on Student Success, which conducts focus groups and interviews at select college in an effort to gather data on the perspectives of student, faculty services personnel and presidents in regards to the total student college experience. Using both methods provides "rich data" (p. 7) that provides the what and why in the area of student success in 2-year colleges. The study found that students appreciate interaction with their teachers through feedback, demands and support. They also stated an appreciation for group work, teaming up, and creating an environment where the class can “work together as a family” (p. 13), and building relationships (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010). Students were asked specifically about an initial class provided called student success or student orientation in which they were introduced to study skill development, service availability, time management and other introductory items for first year college students. Most felt that this course was valuable to their success although only those with low admission test
scores were required to take it. Other students were advised to sign up for the course but were not required to take it.

Rationale for Study Design

Of the six studies related above, four were qualitative, one was quantitative, and one used both methods. With the exception of the CCCSE study, none of the studies were highly generalizable because the sample population and/or response rate was small, and the studies were limited to one institution. However, all were conducted in a community college in the eastern United States, which, when put together, gives some level of generalization. The studies were all generally done to determine how effective the available student services were for the students in terms of their ability to achieve success.

The study by Nitecki, (2011), showed how a specialized program used a sub-committee style of student service offerings to enhance the retention rate of their students. The focus was not on student services specifically, just the way the program was set up to enhance the success of their students. Their use of a successful program with high levels of program completion shows what works and what the students feel is effective. The qualitative aspect of data gathering helps to see the student's point of view, although with low generalization capabilities.

The study by Sorey and Duggan, (2008), being quantitative in nature, gives data and an insight to various opinions related to structured information gathering questions. Open-ended questions would have made the study more relative to the student's personal thoughts. The authors make the comment that "future research ... should combine quantitative and qualitative approaches" (2008, p. 93).
Anthony's study (2011) was a very narrow compilation of information with the small number of participants making the study unable to be generalized to any other organization, which she admits. The in-depth interviews were very revealing as to what the students felt was effective in the pursuit of their goals although the sample was purposefully designed to only include successful students with gainful employment.

Although it is time-consuming to conduct one-on-one interviews, a combination of qualitative data gathering combined with a quantitative aspect is the best way to obtain the information needed from statistical data and the emic perspectives of the students (Center, 2010). With the demographics of students in any given 2-year college, it is important to have the input of both quantitative data and the qualitative data provided by the perspectives of the students. As more qualitative studies are conducted, more information will be available to generalize throughout the variety of private or for-profit, urban or rural, large or small 2-year colleges. Having both types of data will help refine the available student services, depending on the demographics of any individual institution.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter describes the design of this research study. The procedures used to select the college and obtain permission are detailed. The college and its students are described in the process. The selection of study participants is outlined for both the survey and focus group session. The reasons for the selection of the survey instrument items and the focus group questions are explained as well. Finally, the process of analyzing the data is described.

Research Design

This is a single case study using both a quantitative and a qualitative approach. A questionnaire was designed to obtain demographic data on the students as well as their perceptions of the student services offered at this college. It consisted of closed- and open-ended questions and was e-mailed to the entire student body at a time during their finals week and the start of a new term, determined to be a time when most students would be looking at their e-mails. The questionnaire included questions specifically designed to allow exclusion of students outside of the set parameters of the study. Students in the study were required to be current and in attendance for at least one full
semester. The questionnaire introduction gave the students an opportunity to volunteer for one of two confidential, tape-recorded, focus group sessions. From the group of students who asked to participate, two focus groups were purposefully selected to reflect the student population. The intent of the focus groups was to obtain the emic perspective of the students regarding the student services at this college. They were provided a list of three questions relating to the student services, a list of student service themes derived from literature review and a list of the services provided at the college.

Study Context

The college in the study holds accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission and is regulated by the State Board of Regents. Programs of study offered at the college include Medical Assisting, Medical Billing and Coding, Nursing, Dental Assisting, Medical Lab Technician and others. A complete listing is found in Appendix A. Some of these programs also hold accreditation through their specific accreditation agencies. These programs offer a diploma, certificate or Associate degree. The college has recently gained University status and has also incorporated online Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Business. The college is focused on technical skill offerings with the intent of job acquisition after a short and condensed program of study, therefore operating as a typical 2-year college.

Procedure

This research study took place at a small, Midwestern, urban, and for-profit college. Permission for the study was granted by the President of the University and the Academic Dean. The research proposal, questionnaire, and consent form were presented and approved by the University of Akron Institutional Review Board (Appendix B).
The Department Head in the various student services departments were interviewed to ascertain the specific services offered in each specific area. This defined, for the study, the parameters of the student services available to the students.

Student Demographics

In the year 2011, based on approximate numbers, 553 students were admitted; 645 were dropped throughout the year due to low academic performance, lack of attendance, or student request. However, 105 were granted re-entry through application and panel criteria, making the net drops at 540. Factoring the number of graduating students, it left the student population at approximately 600 students at the middle of December 2011.

Information gathered through the data files at this college showed that students in the school are predominantly female (74%) and white (55%). Thirty-five percent were African American/Black and the remainder would be of other ethnicities and races. Eight percent of the population was married and 20% self-report as single, divorced, separated or widowed, which left almost 75% of the students as unknown. Approximately 90% of student tuition was being paid through federal loans taken out by the students using the resources available to them in the Educational Funding Department at this college. This last statistic showed that the students belong to a lower income bracket that allowed for distribution of federal funding for their education.

The vast majority of the students were pursuing an associate's degree in any number of disciplines as seen in Figure 4. An almost equal number of students have had experience in a college setting as those who have had no experience at all with postsecondary education as seen in Figure 5. As these numbers are derived from self-
reporting students they may not total 100% as there will be some overlapping of numbers.

**Figure 4.**
Number of Students in Each Program Area

![Chart showing the number of students in each program area.](chart)

**Figure 5.**
Educational Level of Entering Students

![Bar chart showing the educational level of entering students.](chart)

**Questionnaire**

The developed questionnaire was sent to three co-workers for testing purposes and received no suggestions for correction. It was then sent to students via the school's e-mail system, which was unable to be selective and included all current students both online and face-to-face, all levels from diploma to master degree seekers, and the students
that have graduated as well as faculty members. The questionnaire was sent at the end of
the term overlapping the start of the following term. It was assumed that this would be a
time that the students would most likely be accessing their e-mail accounts while looking
at their grades and their schedules. The accessible student population was around 550
active students in all levels of their studies, as well as an undetermined number of
graduates. The population pool consisted of students who had completed at least one
semester of coursework, which allowed for approximately four months or longer utilizing
the student services offered at this institution. The pool excluded students who had not
been in attendance for longer than 1 full semester, graduates, and those pursuing a
bachelor degree or higher. This left a population pool of approximately 500 students for
the questionnaire. To be able to rule out those who have attended for less than one full
semester, and graduates, test questions were revised to set the parameters excluding them.
An e-mail was sent to introduce the questionnaire and provided an invitation to
participate in the questionnaire and/or the focus interview group. The invitation detailed
the purpose of the study, the need for student participation, the ability to also attend a
face-to-face discussion session, the benefit to the student, school and community, and the
reassurance of anonymity of responses (Appendix C). The invitation contained a link to
the questionnaire. Student consent for the questionnaire was obtained by voluntary
completion of the questionnaire. The student was told in the invitation that all
participation was voluntary and could be discontinued at any time.

The questionnaire was sent to the entire student population to obtain as large a
response as possible from the pool of eligible participants. The goal was to obtain a large
source of data from a diverse population from which information could be compiled and
disseminated. The questionnaire was held open for 10 days with a reminder sent out on day eight that produced several more responses.

Questionnaire Rationale

The 33 questions (Appendix D) used in the questionnaire served as data gathering items related to the participants educational background, their use of student services and their perceptions of those services. There were closed-ended and open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The open-ended questions allow for greater detailed information from the student's perspective.

Questions #1-7 were questions designed to gather information on the student's educational background. The questions determined what program the student was in, their prior college experience, and their goals while in college, part-time or full-time attendance, day or evening attendance and length of time in the program. Not only was data gathered regarding the educational background of the participants, but these questions also determined if the student should be in the study according to the parameters set for the study. After it was realized that the questionnaire invitation would be also sent to graduates, Question #4 was revised to include an answer that would help determine if the participant was a graduate. If this answer was chosen, the participant was removed from the study. Questions #8 and 9 determine how aware the participant was about the availability of student services and where they stand according to their grade point average (GPA). Questions #10 and 20 determine how often they seek help from any of the student services available. Two areas of assistance, child care and a health clinic, were listed that are not available at the school just to see if students thought these were part of the services they could access.
The areas of student perceptions regarding effectiveness of the student services, faculty and staff relationships, and knowledge of what some services can provide for them were addressed in Questions #11-14. Questions #15-16 had the participants reflecting on what student services they have already been exposed to in an effort to determine if the student service was effective. Participants gave their perceptions of the effectiveness of student services in #17 and open-ended Questions #21-23. The answers to Questions #18-19 determined if the students were required to take remedial courses as a student service to enhance their abilities to succeed in Math and English sections of their studies.

The remaining Questions #24-33 determined what the demographic make-up of the sample population will be. Question #32 and 33 addressed parental educational backgrounds to determine if the student is a first generation college student and whether they may have some support due to the level of education of their parents. Other questions asked for information on their income level, their family obligations, gender, marital status age and ethnicity.

Questions #11 and 12 are developed from information in the ASHE Reader Series (Ratcliff et al., 1994), and #13-16, and #3, 17-20, and 31-32 were developed from information in the 2005 CCSSE report (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010). The remainder of the questions were based on findings during the review of pertinent literature and were developed by the researcher in this study.

The questionnaire helped to determine the demographics of students to assure that the population sample accurately represented what is known about students that typically attend a 2-year for-profit college. The questions were also designed to get the student's
perspective on what student services they have used and how effective they may or may not have been to their student success. The open-ended questions allowed for expansion on the participant's perspective and elicited an explanation of what they have found in their experiences with student services.

Focus Groups

Using focus-group sessions was determined to be the best way to elicit in-depth, reflective responses from students by providing a intimate environment. Group sessions were preferred over individual interviews as the conversation among students may spur additional insights. Focus group participants were purposefully selected from those that expressed an interest through an e-mail response. The size of each focus group was limited to 6 students in an effort to glean quality, in-depth information from the participants. There were 18 requests from students to join in the focus group sessions. From these 18, two were ruled out because the student had not attended the school long enough, and another due to their placement in a bachelor program. From the 15 that were left, students were purposefully selected based on requested answers to how long they were in the program and what program they were in. The 12 chosen were meant to represent the student population demographics as closely as possible with 15 students to choose from.

Two focus group sessions were scheduled, with the dates and times listed in the original e-mail invitation. The times offered tried to accommodate students who take classes during the day and those that were only there in the evenings. The participants had the opportunity to sign up for a focus group session by letting the researcher know of their interest through an e-mail response or a phone contact. It was expected that there
would not be a large response to the focus group session. Although only 18 responded to the focus group invitation, it still represented close to 36% of the study participants, a much larger response than expected. Because qualitative data gathering is both time consuming and more difficult to compile, a smaller group size was preferable and was still kept to the limit of 6 per group. Small group sizes also allowed for greater interaction among the participants, generating more in-depth comments regarding the questions they were provided. Because of the limited number of group respondents to choose from, the demographics of the group session were not precisely the same as the student population as a whole, as seen in Figure 6. Although two males were invited to attend, they did not come to the focus group session. One other participant did not attend due to a medical emergency and another due to a last minute scheduling conflict.

For student convenience purposes, the focus group met on the school campus in a room determined to be private. As an employee of the school, it was recognized that when scheduling meetings outside of class time they must be convenient, short,

![Figure 6.](image-url)

**Note.** Four basic demographic areas of the questionnaire participants and the focus group participants measured in percentages.
accessible and beneficial to the participant. As many of the students use public transportation, having the meeting at the school was the most practical and the best opportunity to generate a response. A $10.00 gift card was used as an incentive to participate and was awarded after completion of the focus group session.

The focus group sessions were held at two separate times, one at 2PM and one at 5PM on the same day. They were held the day after the questionnaire was closed. Although six students were selected for each session, the 2PM focus group was comprised of four students and the 5PM focus group was comprised of three students. Of the five students that did not participate, three left messages that they would not be there and two did not show up. Students were advised that the session would be tape-recorded, but that all their comments were confidential and the number and tape-recording would be used for transcription purposes only. After the consent forms were gathered the students provided answers to four questions: What program were they in, what was their gender, how long had they attended the school, and were they full- or part-time students. These were asked to determine the basic demographic composition of the focus groups. All of the focus group participants were female, in a healthcare related field, a student for at least 8 months, and full-time students. The absent students would have provided an improved demographic representation because they were male and/or in a technology or business program. Nonetheless, the students that did participate reflected the results of the questionnaire in areas of most frequently used service, the perception of the value of the various labs, and the most valuable service.

A room at the end of an un-trafficked hallway was chosen for the focus group sessions. Upon entering the room, students chose a nameplate labeled with a number so
they would not be identified by name and would be more likely to honestly and fully express their perceptions relating to the questions to be presented. They were provided the three questions, a list of student services provided at the school and the list of themes provided by Anthony's (2004) study. The participants are known as #2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 12. They sat in a circle and were instructed to identify themselves by their number when commenting so the tape recorder would reflect who was talking. The researcher also took copious notes during the session.

Focus Group Questions Rationale

The focus group questions found in Appendix E were designed to elicit the participant's perspectives in the specific area of the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of student services based on the participant's personal experiences. This was accomplished by asking which student service contributed to their success, what services were lacking that may contribute to their success, and using the areas defined in Anthony's (2004) study, what aspects of the student services they found helpful or lacking. This list of student services and themes is found in Appendix F and G respectively. They were also asked to explain their answers. This answers the research study questions of what student services are the most effective and what is the reason for that perception. It also allowed the participant to follow up with what may be the most effective for them in regards to their student success.

Compilation and Dissemination of Data

Compilation of the survey data took place immediately after completion of the survey. Checkbox® was the program used to generate the questionnaire and also was used to compile the information as needed. Questionnaire responses that showed the
student did not fit the parameters of the study were removed from the compilation. These
included students that had not attended the college for more than one semester and all
graduates. The results after the limitations had been applied are shown in Appendix H.
Information was compiled to show how the demographic areas are represented for the
students. This helped to define the ideal composition of the focus groups. It also allowed
for a degree of generalizability to the study by identifying the demographics of this 2-
year, for-profit college. Student perceptions that were related on the questionnaire were
triangulated with the information provided in the focus group and through interviews held
with the student services department personnel. Focus group dialogue was transcribed
and categorized into general or specific areas of interest. In an effort to maintain the
validity of the focus group information, participants of the focus group forum were given
opportunity the following week to review the compiled group comments for accuracy.
There was no response to this offer. Information was compared against the research
study's questions to verify that the study accomplished what it set out to do and to realize
any unforeseen outcomes. Compiled information was disseminated to the administration
of the school, and to the interested parties through submission of the research report.

Researcher Qualifications

The study researcher is employed by the college as department chair in the dental
assisting program. This position allows for easy access to the students and the
background data needed for the study. The instructor also has experience with the
students in the college, awareness of some difficulties various students have to deal with,
and has spent a portion of her time counseling students in the dental assisting program to
aid them in persistence in their program. The researcher has an undergraduate degree in
postsecondary technical education, is working toward a masters degree in the same field, which is evidence of adequate capabilities to pursue this type of study.

Limitations

Limitations to the use of an electronic questionnaire were the inability to determine in any way the number of participants. As it was voluntary and outside of class time, there was a limited response rate. Out of over 500 students contacted, there were 50 responses. The questionnaire format limited the amount of in-depth information that was retrieved aside from the few open-ended questions.

A limitation to the use of focus groups was the ability to reflect the larger student population with the demographic make-up of those students responding to the group session request. There was also an initial unknown regarding the number of students that may choose to participate, limited involvement if students are not comfortable in a group setting, and the time it would take to transcribe and compile the session's dialogue.
The exact number of invitations sent was undetermined, but was estimated at around 550 to active students and graduates. The response rate for questionnaire completion was about 9 percent of the study population size. Although not mandatory nor able to be determined, the students who agreed to participate in the focus group all confirmed that they had submitted responses to the survey. Assuming that this was the case, of the 9 percent that completed the questionnaire, 36 percent asked to be included in one of the focus group sessions. Those that participated in the focus group sessions were invited to review the transcriptions for validity in the following week. There were no participants that took this opportunity.

Results of the questionnaire were compiled by the Checkbox® program within the parameters that the researcher set for it. Results of the focus groups were transcribed from the tape recorded session and notes taken by the researcher.

Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was active for 10 days. An initial invitation was sent on the first day and a reminder to participate was sent out on the 8th day, eliciting several more responses.
Those that participated in the questionnaire were basically of the same demographic as those in the general student population as seen in Figure 7. The results of the questionnaire show a student population that is representative of the typical 2 year college demographic as shown in the literature review done for this study. Those that participated by responding to the questionnaire were mostly female (81.8%), white (75.7%), over the age of 26 (84.7%), full-time students (96.8%), face-to-face or in an online/face-to-face combination (87.8%), and in school for at least 9 months (63%). Over 90 percent were using student loans (90.9%) and/or over 75% were using federal grants/scholarships (75.8%). A third were married (33.3%) and almost half were single (48.5%) or divorced (12%). Almost 70% of the questionnaire respondents had children living with them (69.7%) and over half of those had two or more children in the home (52%). Almost 3/4 of the questionnaire respondents reported a yearly income of less than $20,000 (75.7%) and yet 87% are working over 20 hours a week. Approximately half of

![Figure 7. Demographics: Student Population versus Questionnaire Participants](image)

*Note.* A comparison of the student population against the questionnaire participants
the respondents reported mothers and/or siblings that had attended college (51%) and a third reported that their fathers had attended college (33%). These statistics give reasonable validity that this study reflects the demographics of a typical 2-year college.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the questionnaire respondents in the various programs. Almost two thirds (63.6%) of the respondents have been attending the school for over 9 months and yet 15% of them stated they did not know where their grade level was. Over 75% of the questionnaire respondents self-reported having a grade point average (GPA) of at least an 80% or better, and nine percent claimed at least a 70%.

When the students were asked to relate which student services were offered at the school, at least 84% knew of financial assistance, tutoring, math labs, writing labs, citation and formatting assistance, and the computer labs. Sixty eight percent acknowledged faculty assistance availability in the area of support with coursework. Less than half knew about class registration assistance, mentoring, life management skills,
remediation, legal advice, transportation and housing assistance, and dental services. Six percent said they were aware of a health clinic although there is not one at this school.

When asked how often they had used various services, over half of the students had never used eleven of the eighteen listed (admittedly two of them are not available...child care and health clinic). Only seven services had been used by more than 33% of students at least one or more times. Those services were class registration assistance, faculty assistance, math labs, writing labs, citation and formatting assistance, computer labs, and financial assistance. The top four student services used more than 3 times were math labs, computer labs, formatting and citation assistance, and financial aid.

Respondents were asked what their perception of how effective the service was for their success in areas such as professionalism, respect received, staffing, care and concern, effort, teamwork, knowledge of personnel, foundation building and the overall experience. Responses showed that students are overwhelmingly satisfied, perceiving the student services they used as "effective" or "very effective." The lowest scores were 75% in the area of "helping you build a foundation for academic success" and 80% in the area of "the level of staffing." Seventy-five percent of the students responded that they received similar answers most of the time from different departments. Responses revealed that students thought they had no help in determining a sequence of courses (58%) but were aware of the courses they would be taking the following term (95%). At least 80% responded that they had been given information on note taking, time management, test taking and setting priorities; About 60% said they learned about resume and portfolio building. Thirty percent said a student service representative never came in
to any of their classes to speak about services offered and 30% said someone came in at least once per term.

With the exception of Life Management Advising (45%) and Student Success (51.5%), over 60% of the responses showed students perceive tutoring, math labs, citation and formatting labs, and writing labs as "very important" to their success. The two most effective student services were listed as financial advising (84.5%) and teacher feedback (87.8%). Of the students that needed developmental courses, determined by their placement testing (57%), over 90% felt that it was helpful toward success in future courses. When asked how often they used various services, 36-39% responded that they never used academic advising or teacher advising, over half (54.5%) never used tutoring, and 66.6% never used life management advising. When asked in open-ended questioning about why they had never used any particular student service, The 10 answers included not needing the service, unaware the service was available, and lack of availability to service.

### Table 1.
Summary of Answers Produced from Question 22 of the Questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Times referred to</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Make sure they are staffed; make them more accessible; 24/7 access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>More accessibility to services; more understanding of needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Be less prejudiced; be more friendly and efficient; provide more details on services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suggestions; All is good</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer child care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty answers to Question #22 regarding the request for suggestions on making services more effective are summarized in Table 1 and include ensuring an offered lab
had personnel assigned to it, scheduling the labs at more convenient times, providing more accessible and caring service to online students, increasing availability of services to 24/7, a more detailed description of what the services have to offer, provision of child care services, and friendlier communications in the services departments.

Question #23 "What one student service do you feel is, or would be, the most effective in helping you achieve completion of your program?" elicited 26 responses. The major topics commented on were the labs, tutoring, teacher, mentor and academic advising, and financial advising. One mention each was made for the librarian, life specialist, and improved communication between departments. Table 2 shows a summary of the responses made regarding these areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Times referred to</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math Lab</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>[Need] all day labs; needs to be better communication between the staff; lab hours need to be adjusted so that all students...still have the option for the labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Lab/Citations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student tutoring/mentoring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Advising/mentoring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Need to be made aware of any and ALL help available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life specialist and Librarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Especially helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Group Results

The focus group participants had all been students in their respective programs for a relatively long period of time (at least 8 months) giving them enough time to interact
with the various student services departments, the faculty and staff, and to understand the
protocol at the school regarding course completion, availability of services, location of
departments, and the chain of command that is employed. The focus group participants
were asked three questions, found in Appendix F. They were encouraged to speak freely
among themselves with the researcher guiding the discussion when necessary.

Question One

The first question was "Which student services from the list provided do you feel
contributed to your academic success at this college?" The answers varied but centered
on the math lab, citation and formatting lab, financial aid, tutoring help from other
students and the faculty, the life management specialist (Student Services Department)
and the librarian. Comments of the focus group participants in the specified topic areas
are presented below. Comments are presented as spoken by the participants. Grammar
and sentence structure was transcribed as spoken. Names are not presented in this report
for the privacy of those involved.

The comments in the focus groups were consistently favorable regarding their use
of the math labs, as seen below.

Student #5: (There) was one math lab that I had to attend but it was
definitely helpful.

Student #3: ...math labs helped me a lot, It had been a while since I had did
math, but...they passed me for math.

Student #4: All the math labs always have extra information, extra study
sheets/worksheets you can work on.

Student #2: I'm an online student, so for me I do everything at home, so
when I need help, I need the tools for the online. I go online to do my
tutoring, which makes it extremely easier for me, at least. I come up back
to the school to get the tools... it's like a code that you enter for the math
lab on-line and then you enter the code and then you have access to, like, help. I actually ended up passing the class with a C.

**Student #7:** Math lab's awesome. The field I'm studying is heavy on math and there is plenty of math labs to help.

The citation and formatting labs are held to help students with the APA style of formatting a research paper. The students often refer to these as the APA labs. Again the comments were favorable although, it appears that the Librarian is the preferred source of help in regards to any research or APA question.

**Student #5:** Citation and formatting assistance and APA is helpful. I had no clue how to format or cite. It was a combination of the Info Lit and the labs.

**Student #4:** We always have to write an APA writing assignment in every nursing course, so the citation and formatting assistance...I just use the librarian, Mr. G. He is an excellent resource for any citation assistance you can need. I mean there's nothing you can come up with that he can not find out how to do, and he is always willing and always available. (The other participants all agreed with this last comment regarding the librarian.)

**Student #4:** I cannot imagine Mr. G. not being here, like, I don't know what...I went to the writing labs and got not a quarter of the information that I can get from Mr. G., so I don't bother with the writing labs. I just go right to Mr. G. I can't imagine writing a paper without his input.

**Student #7:** APA is a big thing here and they have tons of information available and the librarian is always willing to help, and there is tons of information in the library. They have flyers that tell you step by step what to do.

For a couple of the students the financial aid department was the most important service for them at the school. It enabled them to continue with their studies. Several comments were complimentary about the attitude of the department personnel. The name of the department was recently changed from Financial Aid to Educational Funding, and is referred to by both names when commenting.
Student #6: For me, financial assistance was very helpful. Our Educational Funding Department here... I think they are great because they let you know... they make you aware of what your responsibilities are gonna be as far as if you max out on your loans. They really educate you on that and to me; I just think that is the greatest aspect of this school.

Student #5: As far as financial aid is concerned, they has always been very friendly to me every time I have had a question....extremely friendly. They answer the questions to the best of their knowledge. They try to get to the bottom of whatever. If there is anything that I have a question on, they do their best to get to the bottom of it.

Student #3: I agree with the financial assisting. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here. I had some past loans.

Student #7: I've used almost all of the services listed here (on the provided list of services). The financial assistance...they are great. They are always willing to help.

There was only one negative comment regarding the financial aid department.

Student #6: I have had the same experience as you (#5), everybody has been friendly and helpful, but I had my exit interview this week and for starters I had to wait an hour for the person to get here, When she got here it was, like, "Wht'ya need?" and I was like 'wow'. That just blew me away "what'ya need"! But, prior to that, my experience has been positive with financial aid.

In the area of tutoring or mentoring, there seemed to be different ideas of what it meant. As a student service, tutoring would mean a structured meeting with one or more students, addressing a specific subject area or areas. This could be with an appointed student or faculty member. The various labs offered at this school would be considered a form of tutoring. The students in these sessions seemed to regard tutoring as a one-on-one with either a student or faculty regarding an area of difficulty, but did not talk as though the labs were a tutoring session. Regardless, tutoring in any form was regarded highly by the participants.

Student #6: The other service I took advantage of was, of course, the tutoring.
Researcher: Where did you get your tutoring from?

Student #6: It was a student. It is offered for the class. I don't think it is set up by the teacher. It wasn't mandatory, but I think it is probably gonna start to be because they found it to be really helpful.

Student #7: Tutoring is awesome here; there is always someone who knows what you're going through!

Despite the positive comments on the variety of student services available, the most comments were made addressing the faculty, support staff, the Life Management Specialist and the librarian (as stated relative to the topic of the APA reports). The attitude and willingness of these people seemed to be the reasons the participants spoke highly of them. Even if the answers were not found when faculty or staff was approached with a question, the willingness of them to help find the answer or direct the student in the right direction was an important factor for the participants.

Student #4: Faculty assistance (is one of the three services I think are important)...I'm in the nursing program, so um...all the nursing faculty are very approachable and always have other resources where we can get more information.

Student #12: It seems like the regular classes are smaller. You get a lot of attention. And because the school is so small, we get to know almost everybody here. So when you go to the librarian... they'll be more than happy to help you. And then the life skills person is great. She is attentive...it seems like I always see her...um...I was having trouble with money...um...money for food...she actually helped me out with that. I did not have to worry about that. The nursing staff, the registrar, the receptionist...it seems like they all try to do what they can to help you out. Even if they don't know something, they try to get back to you.

Student #7: I've used almost all of the services listed here. The financial assistance- they are great. They are always willing to help. Tutoring is awesome here; there is always someone who knows what you're going through! The life management person, she is great. She is always around she really feels for your situation. She always goes out of her way, I feel, to go above and beyond to find you the help that you need or point you in the right direction to get you help.
Question Two

The second question presented to the participants was "What services are lacking that you feel would contribute to your academic success?" Participants were asked to consider what is lacking in the services provided, if anything, and also what services themselves are not present at the school, but could be helpful to them. This generated a lot of response as to what is wrong at the school in general and not just as related to student services. At times the conversation would wander off topic and would need to be brought back. The main theme here seemed to be respect. When speaking of what is lacking in a service, the participants were most often critical of lack of information and of those who treated students with a lack of consideration, lack of respect for their educational goal, or did not appear to have the time or desire to help the student with their problem or concern. Here are some comments relating to the lack of information:

Student #4: When I got here I did an orientation where they just walked you up and down the hallways real quick. When I got here I did not know how to get my laptop online, I did not know where the bathrooms were. I did not if there was parking...like if you could just park anywhere...if you had to park in a certain place. I did not know until, like, my second term that there was two bathrooms here; I did not know that the school was not open on Saturdays or Sundays for like extra study time. So I think that stuff that the orientation person ....they take too much for granted. Like they know where the bathrooms are so they just think it's not a big deal...I did not know where the bathrooms were. I mean, obviously it's not that big of a place. I found it. I'm not saying that I couldn't figure it out. It's just those little added stresses that you don't need to deal with are unfortunate. My biggest services lacking is knowing what to do and how to do it and who helps you do what and where everything's at.

Student #6: The admissions process- I got the tour and got shown around but did not know there were two bathrooms. On my first day of classes I went to the bookstore with my schedule and she's like “can I help you?” I wanna get my books! I’m thinking I am getting all my books for all my classes and the look was like “Sweetie, you come with your class” and I just felt like a total idiot. Not only was I not informed but the bookstore
person didn't make me feel any better that I was not more knowledgeable about that, but the reaction from the bookstore just made me feel that much smaller.

**Student #2:** What I disagree with, the registry, as well as the Dean, told me not to worry about the other students in the class. I'm online and the other students don't count? It kinda upset me a little bit. These students matter too. Don't put them out because they are across the state or whatever.

**Student #5:** As far as the Admission's advisors, they seem to give you a bit of mis-information; they don't seem to know the information themself. They will tell you things about uniforms but they don't know the information.

The students had a lot to say about their perceptions regarding the lack of respect they are given as students with questions or concerns. There are some comments on the “chain of command,” of which they do not seem to have a clear understanding.

**Student #5:** Registrars are very unfriendly. They act like every time you need something you are a complete burden on them. They still don't get it right.

A lot of the higher people, the management staff...I am a grown woman; I have worked my entire life. I have always been in a professional atmosphere. And I am treated like I am just a dumb teenager, when I take my education very seriously. I take time away from [my family] to pursue... to do this. I do not take excess student loans. I know there are some people who have to, but it almost as though everyone is looked at like you are only here for that stipend check and that needs to stop because it shows disrespect to those of us who are here... who take this completely seriously and are doing everything we can to get our education and we are treated with such disrespect.

**Student #2:** What I disagree with, the registry, as well as the Dean told me not to worry about the other students in the class. I'm online and the other students don't count? It kinda upset me a little bit. These students matter too. Don't put them out because they are across the state or whatever.

**Student #12:** They expect us to follow a chain of command. First you talk to the instructor they the person above them and then finally she will see you. She's not going to help you until she's talked to the program director and the instructor.

**Student #2:** I don't agree with that.
Student #7: I think she should be a little more approachable. This is a small school; she should know your name.

Student #5: And if you have a problem with an instructor and you go to the person above that instructor with that problem, absolutely nothing was done about it. It is almost like, there again, you know, um... I know that right now at this point and time people here are essentially my employers and I get that. Because it's all about professionalism, working...and I treat people with nothing but respect. I am a firm believer... If something happens to you with an instructor that is completely undeserved, you go through the proper channels and you talk to the person and that person tells you well what you want to happen is not going to happen...what's the point? It almost feels like they are not willing to help you graduate a lot of times, like they are trying to hold you back. I get that sense sometimes like they could care less if you graduate. But you would think that they would want their numbers to look good.

The participants also had a few suggestions for services that they perceived as potentially effective for their success.

Student #4: The other service I think is lacking is... because we are all in such accelerated programs, I think as a new student you should be hooked up with an advanced student as a mentor. They can tell you this is what you should expect. When you are in an 8-week term it is hard to even get to know your teachers. So just a little thing, you know, make sure you have this thing for this teacher and that teacher will want you to have that. I know it sounds kind of umm...not professional and it sounds like it is not important but it is. When you are only with people for eight weeks, you almost need a mentor to help you see what is coming next. To know where you're going and what's coming is important.

Student #6: Maybe a faculty advisor, you know, I don't know if that is the correct term, an advisor that is actually a professor that is assigned to you the whole time you are here. And that is who you go to for help, for questions, for anything. I mean, life management probably could help out with that, but, that's only one person.

Student #4: An advisor's a good idea but a student that you're...will be 'real' with you. Someone's that done it they've lived it you know...I think someone needs to be real.

Student #7: I feel the (services that) are offered are good. But, I know that this is a small school and they probably cannot offer something like childcare. That would be definitely helpful
Student #2: I agree with that.

Student #7: I think another thing that could be offered is a few more places where you could (get your vaccinations) cheap, or if they offered them here would be awesome.

Student #2: It would save you a lot of money.

Student #7: Even if the health department would give you a discount it would help.

The course called Student Success was brought up at this time. This is a course previously offered but discontinued in the past year. During the session’s comments, it appeared that there was also confusion about what class they were actually talking about because some had been exposed to the class and others had not. It was not one of the items listed on the list provided them, as the course is not currently offered.

Student #3: I think that everyone should take (Student Success) before starting classes, because it does help.

Student #4: I've never heard of it...

Student #6: I have to disagree; I don't think everybody should take (Student Success). For me, I've already been in a college setting and I don't need that and I don't feel like I'm missing (things).

Student #3: I just took it last term, and I loved it, don't get me wrong, but it was busy-work, I didn't need it, I was right in the meat of nursing. I had to take Intro to Computers, which is fine, but I'd already done it.

Because there seemed to be so much conversation relating to the instructors, the following question was posed by the researcher, “Do you consider the instructors, the Dean, the staff, the administration, as part of the student services?” There was an overwhelming response of agreement that the people in the school were the most important feature. They seemed able to overlook the negative experiences or shed a
positive light on a negative experience because of the perception of so many positive people that have influenced their education.

_Student #2:_ They are like our family. They are like our lifeline.

_Student #12:_ I think the faculty and the staff members are what make the service good and beneficial. They need to let us approach them. We may not know the right person to approach to get the answers that we need so we may approach the first person that we come in contact with. If I see the Dean in the hallway I'm gonna ask her.

_Student #7:_ I think the instructors are very important to our success, very. Very. If we can approach them like you said they are the first one you would approach.

_Student #All:_ yes, because you are with them more, you know them more, you have the time.

_Student #5:_ they will help you and they are approachable and that is a major service.

_Student #4:_ Only one or two of the services listed here, there are only one or two that your instructor cannot help you with. They might not get you a ride or housing assistance, but they can tell you where ...everything on here they can point you in the right direction to go to find it. [In the nursing program] they are all knowledgeable. all my instructors have their masters in nursing, actually. So anything they are asked to do they have already done. They have done it and can show us how to do it.

**Question 3**

The third question that was addressed in the focus group session was "Looking at the list of themes related to student services, do any hold value for you?" Generally all the students felt the themes were representative of the attributes needed in an educational setting and thought all of the themes represented the school they were attending. These themes, also found in Appendix G are

a. respect for students,

b. genuine care and concern for students,
c. holistic approach to addressing student needs,

d. professionalism,

e. teamwork, and

f. a foundation for career success

Student #4: all are found here 110%

Student #5: All but one instructor have been respectful and providing the foundation for those wanting to be in the workforce.

Student #6: The thing that stands out for me as what themes are important for your success, I really do appreciate that externship and I really do feel like that is a foundation for success.

Student #3: We work as a team the teachers are all professional

Student #5: I think that at any other school you would not find instructors like this. They are fantastic.

Student #7: I think professionalism is very important. I think it important that the instructors are professional. I don't think they should go around telling people you are going to fail.

Student #12: (It) seem(s) like all these themes is what makes it, because this school is small you get to know everybody, these things are incorporated in how your instructors act, how approachable they are. If you go here for two years and you never use any of the services here, it is just your loss.

Student #7: All the things on (the list of themes) are (this school).

Another area discussed by the participants was the level of education and experience their teachers had. They found this to be of value to their education and also to their perception of getting instruction from someone who had the practical experience.

Student #4: My instructors have not been taught to teach, they have a desire to teach, they test us on math, they know math.
Student #5: It is beneficial when they know what they are talking about, they've done it. That makes me personally feel better about who I am getting an education from.

Student #4: I think the education of the [instructors] here is superior to a lot. [Other places] you might get a teaching assistant that is just a grad student. The medical courses I am taking here are being taught by a medical professional. They teach.

Student #5: It makes all the difference in the world.

Student #3: Each [of our program instructors] are different and I have learned things between them. It makes a difference they've been there done it. It's like I get a variety and I enjoy it. I get a lot out of it. I like it. They've been there. They did it and they've done it!

Student #4: All the services provided are provided by people that have more of a degree than their jobs need at other colleges. One of the reasons the services are superior to other places is because they are doing it for less money, because usually that means they really want to do it, because no one wants to make less money if they don't have to. I don't think they have to. They are making a choice to work here. This is just a tiny little school.

The last area of discussion was in the area of what they did not know. These students had no knowledge or limited knowledge of a variety of services provided by the school.

Student #2: There are student services that will help you get a job after you graduate. They give you leads.

Others: Really? Wow.

Researcher: Do you know if that service is available at the school?

Others: I don't know.

Student #12: I don't know if they offer that to nurses. I know that nurses will write you letters of recommendation. They try to help you if they feel comfortable that you are the type of student they would recommend.

Student #7: They asked me but I told them I was going back to school.

Student #12: There is one thing on line that they posted an e-mail about career services but I haven't looked into that. I don't know if that is the same thing you are talking about
Student #2: yeah I don't know if you guys know that when you fill out your FAFSA, there is a option on your FAFSA that asks if you want to work and then if the school has part time positions open, they will hire you to work here.

Others: no! Really? Wow, I didn't know that.

Student #12: I knew about the work studies.

Focus Group Summary

The students in the focus group agreed on several topics. They all utilized the Educational Funding Department regularly, they all thought the labs were valuable although not always accessible according to their personal schedules, They spoke highly of the Student Services personnel and the librarian, and all of them expressed the perception that if the personnel were willing to help the student to the best of their ability, this was the most important service of all.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, RESEARCHER BIAS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the response to the questionnaire was less than desired although not unexpected. The focus session groups also had less than an ideal attendance, although the response was reasonable considering the number of questionnaire participants. Although there was not a pre-determined outcome, the results of the study support the current literature review. Researcher biases are addressed and suggestions are made to enhance the number of participants. The study also reveals areas that need to be addressed in further studies. The results of this study are advantageous to the college at which it took place. Reflection on the results presented here will allow college administrators to make enhancements or changes as needed in student services perceived by current students as less than effective.

Discussion

The response to the questionnaire was quite small at 9% of the study population size. Sorey and Duggan (2008) used a similar quantitative method for their study and also had a low response rate. Although there was a small response to the questionnaire for this study, those that participated fit the general demographic of a 2-year college. They were mostly female, older, single parents, and in a lower socioeconomic position. A large
majority were using student loans to pay for tuition. Almost half of them were first-generation college students. Many of them were working as well as attending school. Almost all of the participants were full-time students and the majority of them were in a healthcare related program. These demographics fit the general profile of students at a 2-year college as described by Dr. Kay McClenny (as cited in Randall, 2005), director of Community College Survey of Student Engagement, in an article used in a CCCSE report:

When we talk about ‘high-risk,’ says McClenny, we mean groups of students who are statistically at risk of not completing a degree—for example, first-generation college students, those who do not enter college directly out of high school, the academically under-prepared, students who are low-income, students of color, those who may work more than 30 hours a week and non-traditional age learners.

These are students who come to college with multiple challenges in the way of financial, academic, personal and work-related issues, and they typically have to labor much harder to complete their education. The odds many of them face leave them expending more effort in school but achieving lower results (Randall, 2005, "No Average Student," para. 12, 13).

Interestingly, although most of the participants had been in their program for at least nine months, 15% of them did not know what their grade point average was. Another 75% self-reported a grade point average of a B or better. That does not seem typical for this type of student population. Either the students were reporting a better grade average than they had, they were not informed, or the participants were predominately the students with higher grades altogether. If the participants were better than average students, they may have been students that accessed student services more often than students with lower grades. If that is the case, the perceptions of the successful student may be different regarding the effectiveness of student services than that of those
who have not been as successful. The results may be reflecting only the successful student as opposed to those who have been or are unsuccessful. The study Anthony (2011) conducted, and the study that this one used as a guide, intentionally included only those successful students that had graduated and were gainfully employed.

Of the list of services provided in the questionnaire, financial aid was the most widely known, and according to the focus group, one of the most valuable services at the school. Most of the students in the college are using some level of financial aid; A positive perception of this service is beneficial to the students. The comments the focus groups made regarding this service reflected the individual, respectful and beneficial service the department provided for them.

The various labs seem the most visible at the school, as mentioned often among the focus group participants, and were identified as available by over 84% the questionnaire participants. The focus group participants spoke highly of the various labs and most had utilized them several times. They claimed the labs helped them achieve success in their classes. The questionnaire showed that although the labs were considered "very important," an average of 49% of the respondents had never used a math, writing, citation and formatting, or computer lab at the school. This result is similar to the results shown in the study by O'Gara, Karp, and Hughes (2009) where they found that although students knew of services available, they did not always take advantage of them. Those that did use the services found them to be effective at least 75% of the time.

Each term, the person responsible for setting the lab schedule tries to accommodate all students by setting various hours and days while working with the availability of personnel to monitor the labs. Because the school is small, and the lab
personnel are teachers with other obligations, it would be difficult to make labs available 24/7 as requested. Students are required to search for a lab that will fit into their schedules or make accommodations for the lab availability.

The school offers a dental assisting program and houses a dental clinic, probably the reason that over half of the students knew about dental services, although those in the focus group did not know if the services were offered to the student population and had different and incorrect ideas of what was available to them in the dental clinic. Over 45% of the students were unaware of some services such as mentoring, remediation, legal advice, transportation, and housing assistance. Both the questionnaire results and the focus group conversation brought to light that the students are unfamiliar with all that the student services have to offer. The focus group seemed to have used many of the services, yet were unaware of several aspects of particular services, such as what the dental clinic has to offer, the variety of services the life management specialist can offer, the career services goal of helping graduates secure jobs, and others.

Almost 25% of the time the student service used was perceived as less than effective. The dissatisfaction was predominantly in the areas of teamwork between departments and addressing the overall needs of the student. Although the area of "helping you build a foundation for academic success” was listed as the highest "less than effective" rating, it was shown in the focus group that this category was confusing and held different meanings for the participants. The only area with a "very non-effective” rating was in the level of staffing for the departments. Most of the departments consist of two or three personnel, so there may be a waiting line at some times. The area of under-staffing was addressed in the study by Maddox and Craemer (n.d.), where they found
personnel to be "overburdened" in light of government mandates (p.16). The focus group participants were much more appreciative of the services than the questionnaire respondents and used several of them frequently. The focus group participants were less than satisfied with certain personnel who were perceived as rude, judgmental or uncaring, yet the questionnaire showed 85% of students using the services found the personnel to be professional and showing genuine care and concern.

Both the questionnaire results and the focus group conversations addressed the perception that the departments do not work as a team. The student service groups often need to interact to provide the proper service to the student. In some cases this may take time to coordinate the service, giving the perception of a lack of team-work. The focus group complained that the orientation did not provide them information on basic areas of interest such as bathrooms, parking, and obtaining books for class. The focus group perception was that because the orientation personnel were familiar with these things, they overlooked the fact that incoming students would not be aware of basic points of information. The focus group talked about the orientation tour that the admissions department took them on when initially visiting the school. This in fact, is not an orientation tour, rather an introductory tour, not meant to show students all the schools attributes. If students consider this introductory tour the orientation, they would certainly not be getting the information they desire or need. It has also been mentioned by the orientation personnel that not all incoming students attend the orientation, therefore not getting the information either. Having said this, the researcher has been involved in the orientation sessions and not all the areas the students mention are addressed, so both the students and the orientation personnel make valid points. At the orientation and available
on-line in the BlackBoard system, the student handbook is available for viewing by the students at any time. This handbook is referred to in various ways and students are expected to know the information it contains. Both groups suggested lab times to be more accessible for day, evening, and online students. Reasons for not making use of the labs included accessibility, as addressed earlier, as well as not having a need for using them or being too busy. Student services were listed as being very important to student success so not having a need for them may be a faulty perception, and being too busy to use them may point to other factors such as setting priorities.

The focus group was very enthusiastic about the life management specialist. Although she is the only person in her department, the lack of personnel was never addressed as a negative. They also were very complimentary toward the librarian and his ability and willingness to help with any aspect of research and preparation of a report. The focus group also spoke highly of the Education Funding personnel and their ability to secure funding for the student's education. The Internet Technology (IT) department also garnered praise for their ability to solve technology problems. In all of these instances the value of these departments was the perception of service personnel interest, willingness to go above and beyond, and treating the students with respect. This acknowledgment of the level of compassion shown to the students was also found in the results of Nitecki's (2011) and Anthony's (2011) studies. In Nitecki's (2011) study, it was found that the program that showed the highest graduation rate at a particular 2-year college, was the program where faculty tried to foster a sense of family by taking a personal interest in the students in all facets of their life. The results of Anthony's study found six themes which students perceived as essential to success. These themes, respect, care and concern,
addressing student’s needs holistically, professionalism, teamwork, and a foundation for career success were presented to the students in the focus groups to determine their perceptions of them.

In the open-ended comment area and in the focus groups, the students had a strong perception that the instructor's attitude and willingness to help was the most important student service of all. Even if there had been a disagreement with the teacher, the focus group participants said having instructors that treated them with respect and care was what made this school the best. For some members of the focus group, the six themes presented were said to be what this school was all about and became a "lifeline" (Student #2) for them. It appeared that the reason the life management specialist, the librarian and the Educational Funding personnel were so highly praised, had a lot to do with the student's perception of the genuine care and concern shown. The focus group said that to be treated with respect was an important issue for them. Even if the teachers did not have the answer to a student concern, pointing the student to someone who could help was key to being respectful and helping the student toward success. The questionnaire responses also mentioned that being treated respectfully was an issue and that having teacher feedback was important. The teacher's involvement in the student's education was perceived as vital to student success. Both the focus group and the questionnaire responses perceived interaction with caring teachers as an effective student service that would promote student success.

The research questions posed in this research were answered through the use of the questionnaire and the focus group session.
1. Which student services are the most effective or least effective for student success from the perspective of the for-profit 2-year college student?

2. What reasons do for-profit 2-year college students give for the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of any given student service.

It appeared that from the students' perspectives, the Educational Funding Department, certain labs, and academic help from teachers and other students were the most effective toward their success. Overall, students indicated what makes any student service effective or non-effective from the student's perspective is the level of the service personnel's concern, respect, and a willingness to help.

Researcher Bias

Researcher bias may have existed in the interpretation of student responses, due to the fact that the researcher is an employee of the school and is in a position that oversees instructors and interacts with all student services at the school. The value of this insight, however, is to see the situation from both points of view, that of the student and that of the student service personnel and the student service offered. Although triangulation of the information was attempted by interviewing the student services personnel, use of the questionnaire and the focus group interview of students, there was not a verification of the focus group transcription by the group's participants.

Conclusion

Although this study did not have large questionnaire participation, the responses provided along with the focus group conversation gave the study an insight into the perceptions of 2-year college students regarding effective student services. Despite the confusion of navigating the college system, as long as students perceive that their instructors and
student service personnel are willing to help them succeed, they feel they will be
successful toward program completion. Showing the students a concern for their success,
respect for them as adult students, and willingness to help them in various aspects of their
needs, whether personal or academic, is what students perceive as essential for their
academic success. Student services need to be promoted within the college, attempting to
educate all students of their availability and what they have to offer, then provided with
the attitude of promoting the student's path to success.

Recommendations

Future studies could benefit from a larger scale, generalizable, emic perspective
of unsuccessful students of a 2-year college regarding their perceptions of what services
may have helped them be successful in their academic pursuit. Using both a qualitative
and quantitative method is helpful in creating rich data. If a similar qualitative study is
attempted, an in-class pen and pencil questionnaire along with mandatory, selective,
group participation may ensure a more representative overall response. Another area
worth looking at is why students do not use the services if they know about them.
REFERENCES


Center for Community College Student Engagement (2010). *The heart of student success: Teaching, learning, and college completion (2010 CCCSE Findings)*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PROGRAMS OFFERED THAT CULMINATE IN A DIPLOMA, CERTIFICATE AND/OR AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN EACH SECTION

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University Catalog, September 2011
APPENDIX

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

January 24, 2012

Phylis Neal
161 Essex Lane
Medina, Ohio 44256

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 201201.112 “Student Perceptions of the Value of Student Services at a For Profit 2-Year College”

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your application was approved on January 20, 2012. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ Exemption 2 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study’s design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☑ Approved consent form/s enclosed

Cc: Susan Olson - Advisor
Cc: Stephanie Woods – IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7666 x 330-972-6281 Fax

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution
APPENDIX B

CONSENT APPROVAL

Informed Consent Document

Title of Study: Student Perceptions of the Value of Student Services at a For Profit 2-year College

Introduction: You have been selected, through your application, to participate in a research project being conducted by Phyllis Neal, a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of Akron.

Purpose: Approximately 6-10 persons are participating in the focus group session of this study. It is intended that the participants of the focus group will provide in-depth perceptions of the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of the student services at Akron Institute.

Procedures: You will be asked to give your perceptions regarding three questions that are provided to you along with a list of student services and a list of themes relating to student services. This will take place, once, in a room at the school, in a small group as a discussion. You will be identified by a number rather than your name to keep responses confidential. The session will last approximately one hour and the conversation will be tape recorded for later transcription. After the session, you will be contacted to review the transcribed conversations for clarity and accuracy.

Exclusion: To participate, you must have been contacted by the researcher, you must have attended classes at Akron Institute for at least one semester and you must be in a certificate, diploma or Associate degree program.

Risks and Discomforts: Your only risk is possible identification by members of the staff, faculty and administration while attending the focus group session. As your comments are confidential, the risk is a minimal one. A room that is least trafficked will be secured for the focus group session.

Benefits: The benefits to you for participating in this study may be the use of enhanced student services and a service that can be applied to your resume. However, you may receive no direct benefit from participating in this part of the research study.

Payment to Participants: Your participation in the focus group session will result in receipt of a gift card with value of at least $10.00. Gift cards will be distributed after the completion of the session.

Right to refuse or withdraw: All participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Failure to participate will in no way affect your grades.

Confidentiality: Any identifying information collected will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. Participants will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. Only aggregate data will be used. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from you data, and nobody will be able to link you responses to you.

Audio Taping: The focus group session will be audio taped for accuracy of later transcription and will be used only by the researcher in this study.

APPROVED
IRB
The University of Akron

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Confidentiality of Records: All data gathered in this session will be identified by code only. Participants will not be identified by name but by an assigned number. Tape-recorded comments will be identified only by the number and not the student. Consent forms will be stored separate from the transcribed tape-recordings.

Who to contact with questions: If you have any questions about this study, you may call Phyllis Neal at 330-724-1600 or Susan Olson (advisor) at 330-972-8223. This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666.

Acceptance and signature: I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

APPROVED

IRB 12/12

The University of Akron
APPENDIX B
INTRODUCTION APPROVAL

Survey Introduction

This will be the text in the e-mail sent to students to describe and encourage participation in the survey.

Congratulations!

You have been selected to participate in an opportunity to receive a gift card after assessing the student services offered at Akron Institute. Your input will provide insight and information that is needed from the student's viewpoint. This will aid the administration and faculty in providing the best student services possible to enable success of students at Akron Institute.

Your participation in the 33 question survey, "What Makes a Student Service Effective?" will take about 15 minutes to complete and will be considered a contribution to the enhancement of the services the school provides and can be used in your portfolio or on your resume as a volunteer service. This questionnaire supplied by Checkmate® is completed when you hit the Finish button at the end. It is due by this date.

A 30 minute focus group session will be held at Akron Institute on a day at 2:00pm and on an evening at 5:00pm. This group session will add to the survey with additional input and perceptions of the student services offered at Akron Institute. Participants will be provided a gift card upon completion of the focus group session. Please contact me at pan5@zips.uakron.edu to apply for a session. Space is very limited. Informed consent forms are required for the group session and will be gathered at that time.

The goal of this project is to make sure the student services are effective, using the voice of the students as a guide. Please make use of this opportunity to make your school the best it can be by providing the students with the services that you need to promote educational success.

Your participation in this survey will serve as your consent to take part in this research project. All participation is voluntary and participation can be discontinued at any time without questions asked. Administration, Staff or Faculty will not have access to the identity of the participants.

Contact Phyllis Neal at pan5@zips.uakron.edu or at 330-774-1600 with any questions regarding this survey.

Phyllis Neal
Dental Department Chair
This survey is being conducted to complete my Master's thesis at the University of Akron.

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The University of Akron

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Congratulations!

You have been selected to participate in an opportunity to receive a gift card after assessing the student services offered at Akron Institute. Your input will provide insight and information that is needed from the student's viewpoint. This will aid the administration and faculty in providing the best student services possible to enable success of students at this college.

Your participation in the 33 question survey, "What Makes a Student Service Effective?" will take about 15 minutes to complete and will be considered a contribution to the enhancement of the services the school provides and can be used in your portfolio or on your resume' as a volunteer service. This questionnaire is supplied by Checkbox® and is completed when you hit the Finish button at the end. It is due by March 7.

A 30 minute focus group session will be held at this college on Thursday March 8 at 2:00pm and 5:00pm. These group sessions will add to the survey with additional input and perceptions of the student services offered at this college. Participants will be provided a gift card upon completion of the focus group session. Please contact me at pan5@zips.uakron.edu to apply for one of the sessions. Space is very limited. Informed consent forms are required for the group session and will be gathered at that time.

The goal of this project is to make sure the student services are effective, using the voice of the students as a guide. Please make use of this opportunity to make your school the best it can be by providing the students with the services needed to promote educational success.

Your participation in this survey will serve as your consent to take part in this research project. All participation is voluntary and participation can be discontinued at any time without questions asked. Administration, Staff or Faculty will not have access to the identity of the participants.

Contact Phyllis Neal at pan5@zips.uakron.edu or at xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions regarding this survey or the focus group session.

Phyllis Neal
Dental Department Chair
This survey is being conducted to complete my Master's thesis at the University of Akron.

Click HERE to start the survey
APPENDIX D
QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank-you for taking the time to complete the survey What Makes a Student Service Effective?.

There are 33 questions that should take 10-15 minutes to answer.

Click on NEXT to start the survey.

Contact Phyllis Neal at pan5@zips.uakron.edu or xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions regarding this survey.

Phyllis Neal

Dental Department Chair. This survey is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of my graduate research project at the University of Akron.

The following questions are regarding your educational background and goals. Place a mark next to the correct answer

1. What is your program of study?
   
   a. Medical Billing and Insurance Coding
   b. Medical Assisting
   c. Dental Assisting
   e. Medical Laboratory Technician
   f. Nursing
   g. Computer Networking
   h. Business Administration
   i. Accounting
   j. Business Administration
   k. Healthcare Management
   l. Health Information Management
   m. Technology Management
   n. Criminal Justice
   o. Graphic Design
   p. Legal Assisting/ Paralegal
   q. Medical Office Administration
   r. Bookkeeping and Payroll Accounting
   s. I'm not sure
2. Did you have a associate or bachelor degree before entering this program?
   - a. yes
   - b. no

3. What reason(s) do you have for attending college?
   - a. to obtain a degree
   - b. to learn a new job skill
   - c. for personal enjoyment

4. I am attending school as a...
   - a. part-time student.
   - b. full-time student.

5. I am attending school as a/an...
   - a. day-time student only.
   - b. evening student only.
   - c. combination of day and evening student.

6. I am attending school as a/an...
   - a. on-ground student only.
   - b. online student only.
   - c. combination of on-ground and online student.

7. What is the length of time you have been in your program?
   - a. less than 4 months
   - b. 4-8 months
   - c. 9 months or longer
   - d. I am a graduate of my program

8. What is your current overall grade range at this college?
   - a. A
   - b. B
   - c. C
   - d. D
   - e. I do not know what my GPA is.
This next section relates to Student Services. place a mark next to the answer that most closely answers the question for you.

9. Which of the following student services are offered at your school? Pick all that apply.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>class registration assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>mentoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>life management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>faculty assistance (support with coursework)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>math labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>writing labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Citation and formatting assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>remediation for initial coursework</td>
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<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>child care</td>
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<td>l.</td>
<td>health clinic</td>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>legal advice</td>
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<td>n.</td>
<td>computer lab</td>
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<td>o.</td>
<td>transportation assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td>housing assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td>dental services</td>
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<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td>other (specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Write the number of times you have used any of the following services on the line in front of the service used.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I have not used a student service - go to question #22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>class registration assistance</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>tutoring</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>mentoring</td>
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<td>e.</td>
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<td>p.</td>
<td>housing assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td>dental services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td>financial assistance</td>
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</table>
11. Using a scale of 1-4, please rate the following areas regarding your experience(s) using student service(s). Make a check mark under the description that most closely identifies your perception of how effective the service was for your success. Skip this question if you have never used a student service.

1= Very Non-Effective  2= Less than Effective  3= Effective  4= Very Effective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. How would you rate your overall experience utilizing the student service?</td>
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<td>b. How would you rate the level of respect you received when utilizing the student service?</td>
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<td>c. How would you rate the level of staffing in the student service area?</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. How would you rate the genuine care and concern you received during your use of a student service?</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. How would you rate the level of professionalism of the person representing the student service?</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. How would you rate the effort to address your overall needs?</td>
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<td>g. How would you rate the teamwork shown by the various student service departments?</td>
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<td>h. How would you rate the student services as helping you build a foundation for academic success?</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. How would you rate the level of knowledge of the student service staff to effectively deal with your concern?</td>
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</table>

12. Do you receive similar answers to your questions from the faculty and the student service personnel?
   a. Often the same
   b. Occasionally the same

13. Were you assisted by student services in developing a sequencing of courses for your program?
   a. Yes
   b. No

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14. Do you know what courses you will be taking next term?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No

15. Which of the following have you received information on?  
   a. Note taking?  
   b. Time management?  
   c. Test taking?  
   d. Setting priorities?  
   e. Resume/portfolio building?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>b.</td>
<td>c.</td>
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</table>

16. In your classes, how often did a member of a student service come into your class to talk about what they had to offer you?  
   a. Someone came in at least once for each course  
   b. Someone came in at least once to one course during each term  
   c. Someone came in occasionally  
   d. There was never a visit from a student service representative during my classes

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>b.</td>
<td>c.</td>
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</table>

17. How important are the following services to your success at this school?  
   a. Academic advising  
   b. Financial advising  
   c. Tutoring  
   d. Math lab  
   e. Citation and formatting lab  
   f. Writing lab  
   g. Life Management Advising  
   h. Teacher advising/mentoring  
   i. Teacher feedback  
   j. Student Success Course  
   k. Placement test prior to admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>b.</td>
<td>c.</td>
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18. Did your placement test require you to take a developmental math, writing or English course?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>b.</td>
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</table>
19. Was the developmental course helpful for your success in your later courses?
   a. Yes, to some degree
   b. Not at all
   c. I did not need to take a developmental course.

20. How often do you use the following services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Once or more each term</th>
<th>Less than once a semester</th>
<th>Never</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Academic advising</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Financial advising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Tutoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>d. Math lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Citation and formatting lab</td>
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<td>f. Writing lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Life Management Advising</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Teacher advising/mentoring</td>
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</table>

21. If you have never used a student service, why haven't you?

22. What suggestions would you have that would make student services more effective for you?

23. What one student service do you feel is, or would be the most effective in helping you achieve completion of your program?
The answers to the next group of questions will be used to determine the demographics of the survey participants. Place an X in front of the correct answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 24. In which age range do you fall? | a. 18-25  
b. 26-39  
c. 40-65 |
| 26. What is your marital status? | a. single  
b. married  
c. divorced  
d. living with a significant other |
| 27. Do you have children living with you? | a. yes  
b. no |
| 28. If you are living with children, how many are in the home? | a. one  
b. two  
c. three or more |
| 29. How would you describe your race? | a. Hispanic  
b. African American  
c. White  
d. Asian  
e. Other |
| 30. What is the nature of your employment? | a. I am not employed  
b. I work less than 20 hours a week  
c. I work 20-30 hours a week  
d. I work 31-40 hours a week  
e. I work more than 40 hours a week |
31. What is your yearly income?
   a. I have no income
   b. Less than $10,000.00 a year
   c. $10,000 - 20,000 a year
   d. $20,001 - 40,000 a year
   e. more than $40,000 a year

32. Who in your immediate family has attended college?  Yes  No
   a. Mother
   b. Father
   c. Brother/Sister
   d. Child

33. Using the list below, pick the major one or two sources of funding for your tuition. Pick no more than two.
   a. my own income/savings
   b. parent or spouse/significant other's income/savings
   c. employer contributions
   d. grants and scholarships (Pell grant)
   e. student loans (banks)
   f. federal assistance (Title IV)

Thank-you for your participation in this survey.

You are invited to apply to attend a small group session to discuss in greater detail, your suggestions and comments regarding student services at this college. Contact Phyllis Neal at pan5@zips.uakron.edu or xxx-xxx-xxxx to participate in this important follow-up session. It would qualify as a service project and should be included in your portfolio and resume information.

Your comments in the small group session will be considered anonymous and all identities will be kept confidential. Gift cards for participation are limited, so reserve your spot today.

For questions regarding this survey please contact:

Phyllis Neal
Akron Institute Dental Assisting Department Chair
Graduate student at University of Akron
pan5@zips.uakron.edu
xxx-xxx
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions

A list of the school's available student services, the 6 major themes for student services, and this list of questions will be provided to the students.

For the consideration of student anonymity, each student will be given a number which will be placed on a card in front of their seat for the research team's identification purposes.

Comments will be recorded as the discussion takes place.

1. Which student services from the list provided, do you feel contributed to you academic success at this college?
   Why or why not?

2. What services are lacking that you feel would contribute to your academic success?
   Why or Why not?

3. Looking at the list of themes related to student services, do any hold value for you?
   Why or why not?
APPENDIX F

A LIST OF STUDENT SERVICES AVAILABLE AT THIS COLLEGE

A list of student services available at this college:

a. financial assistance  
b. class registration assistance  
c. tutoring  
d. mentoring  
e. life management skills  
f. faculty assistance (support with coursework)  
g. math labs  
h. writing labs  
i. Citation and formatting assistance  
j. remediation for initial coursework  
k. computer lab  
l. transportation assistance  
m. housing assistance  
n. dental services
APPENDIX G

A LIST OF THEMES RELATED TO STUDENT SERVICES

A list of themes related to student services:

a. respect for students,
b. genuine care and concern for students,
c. holistic approach to addressing student needs,
d. professionalism,
e. teamwork, and
f. a foundation for career success
APPENDIX H
SURVEY RESPONSES

Filters Applied:
2.8 What is the length of time you have been in your program? Is Not Equal To I have graduated from my program.
2.8 What is the length of time you have been in your program? Is Not Equal To less than 4 months

What is your program of study?
(33 Responses)
Did you have an associate or bachelor degree before entering this program?
(33 Responses)

- **yes**: 23 (69.70%)
- **no**: 10 (30.30%)

What reason(s) do you have for attending college?
(33 Responses)

- **to obtain a degree**: 25 (75.78%)
- **to learn a new skill**: 22 (66.67%)
- **for personal enjoyment**: 7 (21.21%)
I am attending school as a...
(32 Responses)

- Part-time student
- Full-time student

I am attending school as a/an...
(32 Responses)

- Day-time student only
- Evening student only
- Combination of day and evening...
I am attending school as a/an...
(33 Responses)

- On-ground student only: 18 (54.55%)
- Online student only: 11 (33.33%)
- Combination of on-ground and online student: 4 (12.12%)

What is the length of time you have been in your program?
(33 Responses)

- 4-8 months: 21 (63.64%)
- 9 months or longer: 12 (36.36%)
Which of the following student services are offered at your school?
(32 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>financial assistance</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class registration assistance</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutoring</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life managements skills</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faculty assistance (support with coursework)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>math labs</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing labs</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citation and formatting assistance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remediation for initial coursework</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health clinic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal advice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer lab</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation assistance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing assistance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dental services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>282</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please mark the appropriate button that corresponds most accurately to the times you have used each service.

(33 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pick one answer for each service that applies to you.</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>once or twice</th>
<th>three or more times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>class registration assistance</td>
<td>18 (54.55%)</td>
<td>14 (42.42%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutoring</td>
<td>22 (66.67%)</td>
<td>2 (6.06%)</td>
<td>6 (18.18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring</td>
<td>25 (75.76%)</td>
<td>3 (9.09%)</td>
<td>1 (3.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life management skills</td>
<td>25 (75.76%)</td>
<td>5 (15.15%)</td>
<td>1 (3.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faculty assistance (coursework support)</td>
<td>16 (48.48%)</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>math labs</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing labs</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>14 (42.42%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citation and formatting assistance</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>7 (21.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remediation for initial coursework</td>
<td>26 (78.79%)</td>
<td>5 (15.15%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child care</td>
<td>28 (84.85%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health clinic</td>
<td>28 (84.85%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal advice</td>
<td>28 (84.85%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer lab</td>
<td>15 (45.45%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation assistance</td>
<td>27 (81.82%)</td>
<td>1 (3.03%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing assistance</td>
<td>28 (84.85%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dental services</td>
<td>27 (81.82%)</td>
<td>2 (6.06%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial assistance</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not used a student service</td>
<td>9 (27.27%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using a scale of 1-4, rate the following areas regarding your experience(s) using student services. Make a check mark under the description that most closely identifies your perception of how effective the service was for your success.

(20 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio Buttons</th>
<th>1= Very Non-Effective</th>
<th>2= Less Than Effective</th>
<th>3= Effective</th>
<th>4= Very Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your overall experience utilizing the student service?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>2 (10.00%)</td>
<td>10 (50.00%)</td>
<td>8 (40.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the level of respect you received when utilizing the student service?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>2 (10.00%)</td>
<td>9 (45.00%)</td>
<td>8 (40.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the level of staffing in the student service area?</td>
<td>1 (5.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>9 (45.00%)</td>
<td>7 (35.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the genuine care and</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>8 (40.00%)</td>
<td>9 (45.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>6 (30.00%)</td>
<td>11 (55.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the level of professionalism of the person representing the student service?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>6 (30.00%)</td>
<td>11 (55.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the effort to address your overall needs?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>6 (30.00%)</td>
<td>11 (55.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the teamwork shown by the various student service departments?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>6 (30.00%)</td>
<td>11 (55.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the student services as helping you build a foundation for academic success?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>6 (30.00%)</td>
<td>11 (55.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the level of knowledge of the student service staff to effectively deal with your concern?</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (15.00%)</td>
<td>6 (30.00%)</td>
<td>11 (55.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do you know what courses you will be taking next term? (20 Responses)**

- **Yes**: 19 (95.00%)
- **No**: 1 (5.00%)
Were you assisted by student services in developing a sequencing of courses for your program? (19 Responses)

- Yes: 11 (57.89%)
- No: 8 (42.11%)

Do you receive similar answers to your questions from the faculty and the student service personnel? (20 Responses)

- Often the same: 15 (75.00%)
- Occasionally the same: 5 (25.00%)
How important are the following services to your success at Akron Institute?
(33 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td>25 (75.76%)</td>
<td>6 (18.18%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial advising</td>
<td>28 (84.85%)</td>
<td>5 (15.15%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>20 (60.61%)</td>
<td>9 (27.27%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Lab</td>
<td>21 (63.64%)</td>
<td>9 (27.27%)</td>
<td>3 (9.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation and formatting lab</td>
<td>22 (66.67%)</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing lab</td>
<td>21 (63.64%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Management Advising</td>
<td>15 (45.45%)</td>
<td>15 (45.45%)</td>
<td>3 (9.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher advising/mentoring</td>
<td>24 (72.73%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher feedback</td>
<td>29 (87.88%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Course</td>
<td>17 (51.52%)</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement test prior to admission</td>
<td>21 (63.64%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did your placement test require you to take a developmental math, writing or English course?
(33 Responses)

- Yes: 14 (42.42%)
- No: 19 (57.58%)
How often do you use the following services?  
(33 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Once or more each term</th>
<th>Less than once a semester</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td>7 (21.21%)</td>
<td>13 (39.39%)</td>
<td>13 (39.39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial advising</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
<td>13 (39.39%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>6 (18.18%)</td>
<td>18 (54.55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Lab</td>
<td>13 (39.39%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>10 (30.30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation and formatting lab</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
<td>9 (27.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing lab</td>
<td>7 (21.21%)</td>
<td>14 (42.42%)</td>
<td>10 (30.30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Management Advising</td>
<td>3 (9.09%)</td>
<td>8 (24.24%)</td>
<td>22 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher advising/mentoring</td>
<td>10 (30.30%)</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
<td>12 (36.36%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you have never used a student service, why haven't you?
(10 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never needed to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not need it, no reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have only used the services that I needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just never used it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their availability isn't very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used a few of the educational services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not know about the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am fortunate that circumstances haven't needed me to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes i have used these services and they have been very useful and helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm still some what new, so I have yet to need the help from the assistance offered, but it's comforting to know they are their if I do need them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What suggestions would you have that would make student services more effective for you?
(20 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>make sure that if an item is offered that someone shows up when the labs are going on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel everything you have set up is beneficial to all people who uses them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that alot of the labs I personally needed to attended were not scheduled at times when I had access to them. One term they get us a few more math labs for us (MLT) and they all were sceduled during OUR classtime. So better scheduling of labs would help alot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone presenting what is offered and when.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have more math and writing labs during the day hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To care more about the online students even if they are from another campus. And not to tell your student to just worry about themselves when others taking the online courses are struggling to get answer from there peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm too busy to use services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make the instructors NON prejudiced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the services are already doing well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information about the services should be provided to the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am sorry to say I have none.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I never get an inviting feeling when I visit the registrar's office. They always make me feel like I am a burden when I come to them for questions or changes to my schedule. More information about what they are. I wasn't aware of all the services provided, and I was never really told in detail what everything was. For example, I was given a schedule for a writing lab when I first started, but I had no idea what that meant or what it was for. Consistency is the biggest thing missing. It is hard to become involved in student services when you are an online student. Maybe if there was a group set up for online students to come to. As a student, you should be able to have access to student services 24 hrs, 7 days a week. The registrars are quite unfriendly and not very efficient. It seems as though when I need assistance with almost any aspect of my education, I get the run around. It would be nice if a child care center were available. Sometimes classes are scheduled at inconvenient times.

What one student service do you feel is, or would be, the most effective in helping you achieve completion of your program?

(26 Responses)

Mentoring program is so important in the nursing program as well to women in general. Being a female and having a female mentor is necessary for overall, long term success. I think it depends on the student, how they learn and what courses they are taking. Each student service provided a specific advantage to my success. All of the services I used were very beneficial. The staff made sure that I had answers I needed to succeed. Life specialist and the librarian were especially helpful. Math Lab

the open labs, writing, citation, math all were beneficial
I feel that for myself it would be the writing lab.

Tutoring-this is essential to success in ANY program. I feel the more help available the better. It is important to be made aware of any and ALL help available to your related courses.

Student tutoring by nursing students.

Academic advising

Teacher advising, teacher feedback

The tutoring lab is great.

Nothing, they are doing a great good......

The lab hours need to be adjusted so that the students that go to school, work and have children still have the option for the labs.

The Computer Labs.

Tutoring for online classes not just a math or writing lab can help.
I would have to say tutoring. They are all important to have in case I should need them, so no one is more beneficial than the other.

Teacher advising/mentoring. I feel like having someone who is in my field, or at least knows a substantial amount about my field of study, who can guide me along the way would be the most beneficial thing for me.

For me, financial services was the key element for the completion of my program in May. Each and every time that I had to work with my financial services representative, I received the best service and care to my needs.

Writing labs should help me write my APA reports better and the dental labs will help me keep reviewing things that I have learned over the past two months.

All of them. There needs to be better communication between the staff.

I am not sure.

In which age range do you fall? (33 Responses)

- 18-25: 19 (57.58%)
- 26-39: 9 (27.27%)
- 40-65: 5 (15.15%)
What is your gender?
(33 Responses)

- Male: 27 (81.82%)
- Female: 6 (18.18%)

What is your marital status?
(33 Responses)

- Single: 11 (33.33%)
- Married: 16 (48.48%)
- Divorced: 4 (12.12%)
- Living with a significant other: 2 (6.06%)
Do you have children living with you?
(33 Responses)

- Yes: 23 (69.71%)
- No: 10 (30.29%)

If you are living with children, how many are in the home?
(23 Responses)

- One: 4 (17.39%)
- Two: 6 (34.78%)
- Three or more: 11 (47.83%)
How would you describe your race? (33 Responses)

- White: 25 (75.76%)
- African American: 6 (24.24%)

What is the nature of your employment? (33 Responses)

- I am not employed: 10 (54.55%)
- I work less than 20 hours per week: 3 (15.15%)
- I work 20-30 hours a week: 4 (12.12%)
- I work 31-40 hours a week: 5 (15.15%)
- I work more than 40 hours a week: 2 (6.06%)
Who in your immediate family has attended college? (33 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio Buttons</th>
<th>Radio Buttons</th>
<th>Radio Buttons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>I Don't Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>17 (51.52%)</td>
<td>17 (51.52%)</td>
<td>1 (3.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>11 (33.33%)</td>
<td>20 (60.61%)</td>
<td>2 (6.06%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother/Sister</td>
<td>17 (51.52%)</td>
<td>14 (42.42%)</td>
<td>1 (3.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>4 (12.12%)</td>
<td>23 (69.70%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the list below, pick the major one or two sources of funding for your tuition. (33 Responses)