A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF REINSTATED STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES IN THE LEARNING TO ESTABLISH ACADEMIC PRIORITIES (LEAP) REINSTATEMENT INTERVENTION PROGRAM

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Limited qualitative research has been conducted on academically reinstated students. The purpose of this naturalistic case study was to identify factors influencing the decision to apply for reinstatement and to examine how participation in an academic intervention program assisted academically reinstated students to succeed. Six reinstated students participating in an academic intervention program participated in this study. A social constructivist perspective was assumed, relying on the participants’ perspectives to cultivate meanings of their experiences. This research offered a better understanding of the needs and experiences of reinstated students, provided evidence of resources, interventions, and programs that might be helpful for future reinstated students. The findings of this study could enhance attrition and retention of this student population.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In higher education, there is growing concern regarding the preparation and readiness of students when entering college. According to McCabe (2000), “Only 42 percent of students leave high school with the necessary skills to begin college-level work” (p. vii). Of the high school students who pursue a college education, McCabe found, “Forty-one percent of entering community college students and 29 percent of all entering college students are underprepared in at least one of the basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics)” (p. 4). Adelman (2004) found four out of 10 students (42%) enrolled in remedial coursework during their collegiate career. A comparable statistic was echoed more recently in the United States Department of Education’s publication entitled “A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act” (2010), in which it was stated, “Four of every 10 new college students, including half of those at 2-year institutions, take remedial courses, and many employers comment on the inadequate preparation of high school graduates” (p. 7). The Common Core State Standards Initiative, which addressed the standards of knowledge and skills attained within K-12 education, was implemented to enhance college and career readiness (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). Although college and career readiness continue to be examined, the previous statistics demonstrate that the percentage of students enrolled in remediation courses has been comparable over the past decade.
In recent years, legislative bodies of various states, including Ohio (Ohio Legislative Service Commission, 2006) and Tennessee (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2011), have decided to eliminate the funding of remediation at 4-year institutions, in turn, restricting the offering of remedial courses at universities. Students requiring remediation would have to complete coursework provided by a community college. Partnerships between community colleges and 4-year institutions are being explored in an effort to address the elimination of remedial courses offered at 4-year institutions (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2011). The aforementioned decisions made demonstrate that the lack of academic preparation of college students is a concern on multiple levels, including state legislative bodies, the United States Department of Education, boards of regents, K-12 education, and post-secondary institutions.

Academic underpreparedness leaves a student vulnerable, lacking the necessary skills to handle the academic rigor at the collegiate level. Academic failure could result in a plethora of academic action, including academic probation, suspension, or dismissal. The probationary student population includes students on academic probation, dismissed students, suspended students, and academically reinstated students. While an increasing body of research explores the population labeled as probationary students (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Earl, 1988; Engle, Reilly, & Levine, 2004; Fish, Blumberg, & Ledet, 1989; Humphrey, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007), fewer research studies (Abbe, 2011; Berkovitz & O’Quin, 2006; Brady, 2008; Hall & Gahn, 1994; Santa Rita, 1998) have been conducted that have focused on the reinstated student population.
Studies addressing the experiences and needs of a subset of the probationary student population, reinstated students who were previously academically dismissed, are completely absent from the current body of literature.

This study focused on enhancing our understanding of how previously academically dismissed students decided to apply for academic reinstatement so that college administrators have a better awareness of the factors that contributed to the previous poor academic performance of the members of this student population. This study also assisted in understanding the experiences of academically reinstated students after returning to college. It is my hope that college administrators develop a more thorough understanding of the needs and experiences of the academically reinstated student population. With this information, college administrators can examine and potentially enhance academic policies and intervention programs to assist in the improved academic progress for this at-risk student population at their institution. It is unethical allow students to return to an institution after being academically dismissed without providing the adequate support and resources to assist in their academic endeavors upon reinstatement. At the same time, these same academic policies and intervention programs can foster in the development of a sense of responsibility and accountability on part of the students. Students have to assume an active role in their pursuit of academic success upon reinstatement. This study contributed to the practice of assisting academically reinstated students in succeeding after reinstatement.

Due to the fewer number of studies conducted, the academically reinstated student population was included in the much larger genre of the at-risk probationary student
population. The prior research conducted on the overall at-risk probationary student population encompassed two different areas: potential factors influencing the academic success of at-risk students (Isaak, Graves, & Mayers, 2006; Molina & Abelman, 2000) and components of academic intervention programs for at-risk probationary students (Earl, 1988; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007; Kelley, 1996; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). Unfortunately, there was a lack of qualitative research addressing the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students. This study offered a significant contribution to the literature by illuminating the voices of academically reinstated students, a previously overlooked at-risk student population. The academically reinstated students’ perspectives fostered a greater awareness of the experiences and needs of reinstated students, offering validation and additional insight in working with this at-risk student population.

**Problem Statement**

Academic performance of the overall at-risk probationary student population has become a greater concern for higher education administrators, policymakers, academic advisors, faculty instructors, and researchers, as an increased focus was attributed to attrition and retention. Prior research studies focused on the overall at-risk probationary student population (Earl, 1988; Isaak et al., 2006; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Kelley, 1996; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Molina & Abelman, 2000). What remained to be explored, however, was to better understand the experiences and needs of a subset of the probationary student population, specifically reinstated students who were previously academically dismissed. My hope is that this study gives reinstated students a voice by
serving as a platform for the larger exploration of this at-risk student population. This study provided reinstated students the opportunity to describe their needs and experiences upon returning to the institution from which they were academically dismissed. This was a problem because this student population had already previously demonstrated a dismal academic performance at the collegiate level. Data collected by the United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) found a lower level of educational attainment resulted in decreased earnings and higher unemployment rates. This data demonstrated that the pursuit of higher education can have a tremendous impact on the future of students in addition to society. Therefore, if reinstated students are granted the opportunity to return to higher education, the necessary support must be provided to match their needs. Otherwise, it can be characterized as unethical to permit reinstated students the opportunity to return to college without adequate and relevant resources. Finally, without providing the necessary foundation to foster academic success, there is a higher potential for failure after reinstatement, which can have a prolonged impact on the student and society in the future.

**Significance of Study**

Despite the plethora of previously conducted research focused on at-risk and probationary students, there was a lack of a comprehensive understanding of academically reinstated students. This study gives academically reinstated students a voice to explain the trials and triumphs that led to their previous academic failure. This knowledge offers a better understanding of the needs and experiences of reinstated students upon
reinstatement, providing crucial evidence of the resources, interventions, and programs that might be helpful for future academically reinstated students.

This study assists higher education administrators in the development of strategies and interventions for probationary students to improve their academic performance and avoid future academic dismissal. Academic and faculty advisors can utilize this information to guide their advising practices. Reinstatement committees have a better insight into the experiences of academically reinstated students. The information gathered from this study could influence academic probation and reinstatement policies and practices in the future. Finally, this study clarified how higher education administrators can develop and implement academic intervention programs for academically reinstated students.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this naturalistic case study was to identify the factors that influenced the decision to apply for reinstatement of previously academically dismissed students and to examine how participation in an academic intervention program assists academically reinstated students to succeed upon reinstatement. Six academically reinstated students in the Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP) program at a large, public, mid-western, four-year institution were invited to participate in this study. I asked two central questions that guided this study:

1. What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed?
2. How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to improve their academic performance after academic reinstatement?

Assumptions

Numerous assumptions influenced this research study. First, Merriam (1988) stated, “In a qualitative approach to research the paramount objective is to understand the meaning of an experience” (p. 16). This study assumed that each reinstated student participating in the LEAP academic intervention program gathered insight into the meaning of his or her experience. Secondly, “Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities—that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception” (p. 17). This study assumed that the subjective nature of qualitative research fostered multiple realities of the students’ experiences and related meanings as participants in the academic intervention program. Thirdly, “Qualitative research strives to understand how all the parts work together to form a whole (p. 16). This study assumed that the multiple realities of the students in this study provided the framework for gathering a deeper understanding of reinstated students’ needs and experiences in association with their participation in the LEAP academic intervention program.

Case study was the strategy of inquiry selected for this study. According to Merriam (1988), “Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand
its readers’ experiences” (p. 32). This study assumed that the insights and meanings gathered expanded the knowledge base on the academically reinstated student population.

A social constructivist perspective was assumed in conducting this study. In his earliest works, Vygotsky (1978) explored the social constructivist perspective, discussing the idea of learning and meaning that occurred as a result of social interaction with others. According to John-Steiner and Souberman (1978):

In the development of higher functions— that is, in the internalization of the processes of knowing- the particulars of human social existence are reflected in human cognition: an individual has the capacity to externalize and share with other members of her social group her understanding of their shared experience. (p. 132).

Therefore, this study assumed that participating in the social environment of the academic intervention program with their fellow peers helped participants to cultivate meaning of their experiences as previously dismissed and recently reinstated students. It was assumed that the students participating in this research study described their experiences the associated meanings that developed. Creswell (2009) noted, “Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple” (p. 8).

As the researcher, I wanted to advocate for members of the academically reinstated student population. By sharing their experiences and insights, this study assumed that the findings contributed to changes in policies, procedures, intervention
programs, and resources associated with the academically reinstated student population. I wanted to provide a platform for previously academically dismissed students to succeed upon reinstatement. It was assumed that the findings of this study expanded the available literature focused on academically reinstated students. Also, it was assumed that this study shed insight into the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students, while diminishing the negative stigma associated with this student population.

As stated by Merriam (1988), “The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 19). During my four-year tenure as an academic advisor within the Student Advising Center, which is housed in the College of Undergraduate Studies, I developed biases through my previous professional experiences in working with academically reinstated students. This study assumed that data collection and analysis could be influenced by the biases I developed.

**Delimitations**

This study did not address the influence of a student’s potential uncertainty regarding majors and careers on his or her academic performance upon academic reinstatement. The focus of this inquiry was not to conduct a program evaluation of the LEAP program. A final delimitation of this study was that it was limited to one institution, restricted to students enrolled in one major (exploratory), and confined to one academic intervention program (LEAP).

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic dismissal*—Process by which a student whose academic performance indicates little chance of obtaining the minimum grades required for graduation is no
longer allowed to enroll at the university. The minimum academic dismissal period is 12 months at which time the student may choose to apply for academic reinstatement.

*Academic probation*—A warning to students who fail to maintain a semester and/or an overall grade point average of 2.00 or better. Failure to improve the academic record within a specified time may result in academic dismissal.

*Academically reinstated student*—A student could gain re-entry to the university after academic dismissal. Reinstatement following the academic dismissal period was neither automatic nor guaranteed. A student could be reinstated only if they provided convincing evidence of probable improved academic progress if permitted to return to the University. A student was required to complete the following requirements to be considered for reinstatement:

1. A detailed personal statement (See Appendix A)
2. A completed Application for Reinstatement (See Appendix B)

*At-risk students*—At-risk students were defined as those who are “deficient in skills; having low incoming grades; having an expectation of failure, lacking familiarity with academic requirements, and having an absence of role models, among other negative characteristics” (Santa Rita & Scranton, 2001, p. 1). Santa Rita and Scranton identified five categories of at-risk students: (a) students placed into remedial coursework; (b) students placed on academic probation; (c) students placed on suspension waivers or students readmitted after being academically suspended; (d) students who earn below a 2.0 cumulative GPA during any semester; and (e) students encountering non-academic barriers to success, including family obligations, occupational responsibilities, and
financial obstacles. Other terms used to describe at-risk students include *high-risk students* (Jones & Watson, 1990), *disadvantaged students* (Fox, 1986), *academically underprepared students* (Grimes, 1997), *adult students* (Quinnan, 1997), and *new students* (Cross, 1971).

*Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP)*—LEAP was an academic intervention program for exploratory reinstated students. As shown in Table 1, there were multiple components of the LEAP program throughout the semester. LEAP encompassed a half-day group session in which all reinstated students were required to attend. Reinstatement would have been rescinded if the student was tardy or absent from the half-day group session. Three additional advising sessions were strongly encouraged as part of the LEAP Program:

1. The first advising meeting addressed the student’s plan for improvements in his or her academic progress.
2. The second advising meeting addressed class registration for the upcoming semester and the student’s academic progress.
3. The third advising meeting addressed the student’s transition into next semester.
Table 1

Components of LEAP Program

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<td>Second Advising Session (Encouraged)</td>
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<td>Third Advising Session (Encouraged)</td>
<td>Weeks 12-13 of semester</td>
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Probationary students—Within this at-risk population, the probationary student population included students on academic probation, dismissed students, suspended students, and academically reinstated students.

Success—For the purpose of this study, success was defined as a student earning a minimum 2.0 semester grade point average. The achievement of a minimum 2.0 grade point average was considered to be making academic progress toward the completion of a college degree.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Academic performance of the overall at-risk student population has become a greater concern for higher education administrators, policymakers, academic advisors, faculty instructors, and researchers, as an increased focus has been attributed to attrition and retention. Throughout the research literature, the term at-risk students was substituted with other terms, including high-risk students (Jones & Watson, 1990), disadvantaged students (Fox, 1986), academically underprepared students (Grimes, 1997), adult students (Quinnan, 1997), and new students (Cross, 1971). Although these aforementioned terms were used interchangeably in the literature, there were a plethora of variations in defining the term at-risk and the alternative phrases. Tinto (1993) stated, “Individuals may be classified as ‘high risk’ in that they possess one or more attributes which, in the past, have been associated with higher rates of departure” (p. 224). Jones and Watson (1990) identified high-risk students as “minorities, the academically disadvantaged, the disabled, and those of low economic status” (p. iv). Fox (1986) stated, “Economically and academically disadvantaged college students are widely known to be at risk for attrition” (p. 415). First-generation students (Santa Rita & Scranton, 2001) and probationary students (Cruise, 2002; Heisserer & Parrette, 2002) were included in the genre of at-risk students.

Roueche and Roueche (1993) described at-risk students as:
Students who are not only underprepared for college, but who are also working 30 or more hours per week, who have little if any support from key family members, who are first-generation college attenders, who have what some have described as “failure expectations,” and who have little academic success as they begin their postsecondary experience. (p. 1)

For the purpose of this study, in accordance with the perspective of Santa Rita and Scranton (2001), at-risk students were described as those who had inadequate skills, low grades, did not expect to succeed, lacking knowledge of academic expectations and demands, and lacking appropriate mentors. Santa Rita and Scranton identified five categories of at-risk students, including students who were required to enroll in remedial coursework, students who were academically probated, students who were academically suspended or students who were seeking readmission after a suspension, students earning lower than a 2.0 overall GPA at the end of a semester, and students who are hampered academically due to potential life and academic barriers.

Quinnan (1997) defined at-risk students in higher education as those who “are poorly equipped to perform up to academic standards” (p. 31). In higher education, there is growing concern regarding how prepared students truly are when entering into college. Hansen (1998) acknowledged a decline in student preparedness entering college, although students still demonstrated an enhanced confidence in their abilities. Grimes (1997, ¶1) found “academically underprepared community college students demonstrated a lower course completion rate, greater attrition, more test anxiety, and more external locus of control than college-ready students.” The latter finding of students exhibiting more
external locus of control indicated “a perception of less control over their environment and less responsibility for taking action” (Grimes, 1997, DISCUSSION Academic Preparedness, ¶ 1).

With the lack of academic preparation of students entering college, “In some cases, failure is directly related to students’ inability to grasp the material being presented or their lack of interest in particular subjects” (Cruise, 2002, ¶ 2). Academic underpreparedness leaves a student vulnerable, lacking the necessary skills to handle the academic rigor at the collegiate level. Academic failure could result in a plethora of academic action, including academic probation, suspension, or dismissal. Cruise (¶ 2) acknowledged, “While there are at-risk students who find themselves on academic probation, it is important to note that not all probationary students begin their college careers with an at-risk label.”

Within the at-risk population, the probationary student population included students on academic probation, dismissed students, suspended students, and reinstated students. While an increasing body of research explored the population labeled as probationary students (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Earl, 1988; Engle et al., 2004; Fish et al., 1989; Humphrey, 2006; Kamphoff et al., 2007), there was a significant void in the current research literature available addressing the experiences and needs of a subset of the probationary student population: academically reinstated students who were previously dismissed.

This review of literature was inclusive of scholarship on probationary students generally and culminated in consideration of the limited research specifically addressing
academically reinstated students. The potential factors influencing the academic success of probationary students, including academically reinstated students, were examined in prior studies. The development of numerous models of academic intervention programs implemented to address the barriers that hampered the prior academic success of the overall probationary student population.

**Potential Factors Influencing Academic Success of Probationary Students**

A variety of factors previously were studied in an effort to determine the likelihood of academic success for at-risk probationary students. Common attributes and characteristics of probationary students and, more specifically, academically reinstated students were identified. The following paragraphs include a review of studies that were conducted to identify factors influencing the academic success of probationary students.

**Identity and Career Development**

Studies conducted solely on reinstated students who were previously academically dismissed have addressed varying aspects of student academic success. Lucas and Hunt (2002) evaluated the relationship between identity, self-esteem, and career development of previously dismissed students at the University of Maryland who were recently readmitted to the institution. Participation in the study was voluntary with participants receiving experimental credit. Of a total 176 undergraduate students who were previously academically dismissed as a result of a cumulative GPA below a 2.0, the sample was comprised of 164 undergraduate students. The students participated in a course focused on academic and study skills. A mixed methods study was conducted. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire, which measured identity development, self-esteem,
and career exploration. Two open-ended questions were also posed to the participants at the conclusion of the questionnaire to gather a better understanding of how the university experience might help or inhibit their career development. Findings of this study demonstrated that increased levels of self-identity showed an enhanced relationship with factors associated with career exploration and development for upper-level students. Consequently, freshmen and sophomore level students encountered a greater obstacle of creating a link between the need to engage in career exploration activities and the attainment of their future career goals.

**Influence of Grade Level**

Hall and Gahn (1994) conducted a quantitative study, which consisted of a sample of 160 reinstated students at a large mid-western university. Of this sample population, 80 reinstated students were considered successful after their return to the university following academic dismissal. Hall and Gahn found that grade level of the student at the time of dismissal was a factor related to academic success of readmitted students who were previously dismissed. According to Hall and Gahn, “Students were considered successful if they graduated, continued in good standing (earning at least a 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale), or left the university in good standing” (p. 9). Evidence demonstrated that previously dismissed sophomores and juniors were more successful overall in their academic endeavors after being readmitted compared to freshmen and seniors.

In a related study, Wishart (1990) found that academic success of students varied by grade level in her quantitative study of 187 reinstated students at Iowa State University from 1981–1987. For the purposes of this study, academic success was achieved if the
student “had graduated from the university, was currently enrolled, or had left the university in good standing” (Wishart, 1990, p. 19). Wishart identified potential characteristics of the student population, such as poor academic record of the freshman students and enhanced motivation of the sophomores and juniors, which could have possibly influenced the results of the study.

**Influence of Previous Grade Point Average**

According to a study conducted by Hall and Gahn (1994), grade point average prior to dismissal and transfer grade point average were good predictors of success after being readmitted to the university. Grade point average as it relates to Quality Point Deficiency was also found to be statistically significant. According to Wishart (1990), it is beneficial to reference the Quality Point Deficiency in examining the potential success of a dismissed student who is reinstated. The higher the number of Quality Point Deficiency, the less likely the student will be to succeed.

Berkovitz and O’Quin (2006) chose to research grade point average as it relates to the likelihood of graduation among academically dismissed students. The authors were interested in examining various factors that could assist in predicting future graduation. The sample population of this quantitative study consisted of 290 readmitted students at a medium-sized, public, four-year institution located in a Northeastern state. All of the participants had stopped out for a minimum of one semester. The findings of this archival study found that reinstated students who were previously academically dismissed are less likely to graduate compared to other at-risk readmitted students who previously halted their academic endeavors due to reasons such as financial obstacles and personal barriers.
At the same time, grade point average at the time of reinstatement is not considered to be a predictor of graduation.

**Influence of Length of Time Since Dismissal**

The amount of time between dismissal and reinstatement of a student was not found to be influential in determining the academic success of a student upon reinstatement. Hall and Gahn (1994) stated length of time since the student was dismissed was not found to be a predictor of success after the student was readmitted to the institution. The authors identified enhanced motivation of the readmitted students as a possible factor that helped in dismissing the assumption from previous literature regarding length of time after dismissal as a possible factor leading to an enhanced potential for success for previously academically dismissed students readmitted to the institution.

Meadows and Tharp (1996) conducted a quantitative study, reviewing the academic records of 765 undergraduate students who were previously academically suspended from Middle Tennessee State University between the fall 1991 semester and the summer 1993 semester and were permitted to return to the institution within 1 year of academic suspension. The semester GPA at the end of the term in which the participant returned to the institution was examined. The authors supported the belief that length of time since dismissal is not a predictor for academic success. Meadows and Tharp found no significant relationship existed between the length of time between term dismissed and readmitted term and the grade point average achieved by the previously suspended student upon being readmitted to the institution.
Varying Levels of Intrusion Associated With Intervention Programs

Other research studies have included the reinstated student population within the at-risk student population being researched. Numerous studies have been conducted which focus on varying levels of intervention programs to assist in the improved academic progress and satisfaction of at-risk students in general. A study conducted by Mann, Hunt, and Alford (2004) evaluated the influence participation in the Monitored Probation program had on grade point average and levels of student satisfaction with the institution. The Monitored Probation program, an academic intervention program implemented at Lamar University, targeted academic probationary, readmitted, and suspended General Studies students. The Monitored Probation program included three levels of intervention dependent upon the participant’s overall grade point average. The academic intervention program included such resources as academic counseling, tutoring, study skills courses, workshops, and availability of support services. Although participation in the Monitored Probation program was mandatory, participation in the study was voluntary.

The sample size consisted of a total 92 freshman students who had accrued less than 30 credit hours at the college level in the fall 1998 term. The sample size was comprised of 11 students assigned to the low intervention level, 17 students assigned to the medium intervention level, and 34 students assigned to the high intervention level, all of whom were General Studies majors. The 30 other participants in this study were students assigned to the control group. They were probationary students who were declared in majors outside of the General Studies major. All participants were required to
complete a satisfaction questionnaire by telephone. This study evaluated the impact participation in the intervention program had on grade point average and levels of student satisfaction with the institution. Participants of the Monitored Probation program achieved a higher mean increase of grade point average and higher levels of satisfaction with the university.

Another study that addressed varying levels of academic intervention was conducted by Molina and Abelman (2000). The quantitative study was conducted in an effort to determine the extent to which the level of academic intervention impacted the increase in mean grade point average for students on academic probation. The sample size consisted of 150 probationary students at an urban, mid-western institution, who were randomly assigned to one of three different intervention strategies, which included a nonintrusive control group. The findings of the study suggested a statistically significant increase in mean grade point average between students randomly assigned to the full-intrusion intervention compared to students randomly assigned to the moderate-intrusion intervention. However, there was minimal statistical significance between the nonintrusive and moderate-intrusion interventions. The findings also suggested that the full-intrusion intervention for academic probationary students resulted in the highest retention rates of all at-risk students participating in the study. According to Molina and Abelman, the findings of this study suggested that the more intrusive the academic intervention strategy administered, the more likely the students are able to identify the factors, both internal and external, that hampered their academic performance. The highest level of at-risk students is more responsive to the most intrusive forms of
academic intervention. In a follow-up longitudinal study, Abelman and Molina (2001) identified increased levels of persistence and higher cumulative grade point average over time associated with the most intrusive intervention implemented. The findings suggested that intrusive interventions were a means of improving both student performance and persistence for at-risk students.

**Influence of Academic Support Services**

High involvement of academic advisors had a significant positive influence on the performance of probationary students. Kirk-Kuwaye and Nishida (2001) conducted a quantitative study that spanned three consecutive semesters. Probationary students in the Arts and Sciences College at a large, public institution were randomly assigned into two groups, low involvement and high involvement. In fall 1998, 41 probationary students were assigned to the low involvement group and 36 probationary students were assigned to the high involvement group. In spring 1999, 55 probationary students were assigned to the low involvement group and 49 probationary students were assigned to the high involvement group. Finally, in fall 1999, 38 probationary students were assigned to the low involvement group and 25 probationary students were assigned to the high involvement group. According to Kirk-Kuwaye and Nishida, “The results suggest that full institutional intervention is needed to effectively help probation students” (p. 40). High involvement in this study was characterized by letters sent to the student regarding academic probationary status, attendance at mandatory advising meetings, agreement to utilize university resources, information provided regarding successful study strategies, reminder phone calls regarding meeting sessions and written assignments on interventions
pertaining to study strategies. Academic advisors are not the only campus resource identified as an influential support for at-risk students. Lucas and Hunt (2002) also identified that “students, at least those at academic risk, need regular and meaningful contacts with representatives of the university system” (p. 328). Support services cited were tutoring, academic advising, career and emotional counseling, peer advising, and faculty and staff mentoring.

**Personal Characteristics Associated With At-Risk Student Success**

A body of research has revealed the significance of personal characteristics that can negatively influence the academic performance of students. According to a study conducted by Isaak et al. (2006), academic probationary students enrolled in an academic intervention program at Rochester Institute of Technology ($n = 150$) were compared with students in good standing ($n = 153$) to determine if obstacles encountered by students on academic probation were different from those encountered by students in good standing. Academic probationary students and students in good standing completed a problem checklist which addressed possible barriers such as academic, motivational, and emotional obstacles. Academic probationary students also completed a survey that assessed study skills and attitudes toward education and instructors. Students on academic probation cited a higher level of emotional and stress related factors as barriers in their academic performance. Other factors identified at comparable percentages by both student populations were procrastination, time management, and study skills. There is a remarkable difference between the two student populations regarding their performances on the standard assessment of study skills administered to all students. The students listed
on academic probation performed significantly below the 50th percentile on the study 
skills assessment. At the same time, probationary students cited the same level of concern 
with their academic study skills as students in good standing.

Fish et al. (1989) administered a questionnaire as part of their study on the level of 
engagement of students on academic probation with their families compared to students 
who in academic good standing. The participants in this study were undergraduate 
students at a large, northeastern institution. Of the total sample size \( n = 75 \), 22 
undergraduate students who were on academic probation and 53 undergraduate students 
who were in academic good standing and had never had an incident of probation 
participated in the study. They found that students on academic probation had a more 
positive perspective of their families than students who had never been on academic 
probation during their collegiate career. Probationary students were members of larger 
families than nonacademic probation students. Birth order was not found to impact the 
participants’ academic standing. The parents’ marriages were considered happier for 
academic probationary students than students who were in good standing throughout their 
collegiate career. Academic probationary students were more pleased with the cohesion 
within their families in relation to members of the comparison group. Finally, academic 
probationary students characterized their families as better able to handle conflict and 
identify resolutions to minimize stress. The only area in which probationary students 
rated a more negative perspective than nonacademic probationary students was in their 
identification of a lower ideal adaptability.
Trombley (2000) conducted a study at Los Angeles Southwest College, examining the characteristics of academic probationary students compared to students in good standing. In 1998, both students on academic probation \((n = 207)\) and students in good standing \((n = 122)\) were asked to complete a questionnaire. The findings of this study demonstrated that there were larger number of academic probationary students working full-time compared to students in good standing, possibly limiting the amount of available time to focus on academic responsibilities. In addition, academic probationary students reported lower high school grade point averages, which could be linked to possible under preparedness for higher education. Finally, academic probationary students were found to have a greater number of children within their households compared to students in good standing, which also could be identified as a possible characteristic influencing their academic performance in the classroom.

Ott (1998) researched predictors of early academic dismissal specifically for first-time freshmen. In this quantitative study, Ott examined various variables to determine their influence on academic performance: student ability (SAT verbal and math scores) and precollege achievement (high school grade point average), personal demographic characteristics (race and sex) and college environment characteristics (dormitory resident or commuter, full-time or part-time attendance status, and student’s major). Two cohorts of first time-freshmen enrolled in fall 1984 \((n = 507)\) and fall 1985 \((n = 455)\) at an eastern state university were included in the sample population. Of the 507 first-time freshman students enrolled in fall 1984 included in the sample, 165 were academically dismissed at the conclusion of their first semester and 342 earned a 2.0
semester GPA at the end of their first semester, which resulted in satisfactory performance. Of the 455 first-time freshman students enrolled in fall 1985 included in the sample, 172 students were academically dismissed at the conclusion of their first semester and 283 students were classified as earning satisfactory performance.

Ott (1998) found students with relatively low high school grade point averages were at higher risk of academic dismissal after the completion of their first semester in college. The mean high school grade point average of the academically dismissed students in this study was 2.598 (on a four-point scale). Race was found to be a predictor of academic dismissal. The results of the study demonstrated African-American students were at a greater risk of academic dismissal at the completion of their first semester in college. The last predictor of academic dismissal was in two different academic groups (Division of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering). The other variables in the study were not found to strongly determine the potential for academic dismissal for freshmen in their first semester of college. Ott suggested implementing additional academic and social intervention strategies for students who are members of one or more of the aforementioned criteria. Ott also recommended adjusting admissions criteria to place a stronger emphasis on high school grade point average than on SAT scores. The identification of academic or social support for African-American students to promote academic progress and persistence for first-time freshmen was also recommended.

In a quantitative study conducted by Santa Rita (1998) in fall 1994 at Bronx Community College, 86 students who were previously academically suspended and
recently readmitted voluntarily participated, completing a questionnaire and various tests, including placement tests, a survey, and an inventory. He found prior academic achievement in high school was not a predictor of academic success for readmitted students who were previously suspended. Santa Rita also found the amount of prior collegiate experience was not a predictor of academic success of previously suspended students after being readmitted. Placement scores did not predict academic success with the exception of the math placement score for both male and female students. A higher math placement score was found to be a predictor of a student’s academic success.

Hsieh, Sullivan, and Guerra (2007) examined self-efficacy and goal orientation in relation to a student’s underachievement in college and his or her resultant dropping out of college. As stated by Hsieh et al.:

Self-efficacy refers to peoples’ judgments about their abilities to complete a task. Goal orientations refer to the motives that students have for completing tasks, which may include developing and improving ability (mastery goals), demonstrating ability (performance-approach goals), and hiding lack of ability (performance avoidance goals). (p. 455)

The quantitative study, which included two sets of questionnaires, was conducted at a large, metropolitan institution, which served the Hispanic population. It was located in the Southwestern region of the United States. Of the 112 undergraduate students in the sample population, 60 students were on academic probation (defined as having a GPA lower than a 2.0 GPA) and 342 students were considered in good standing (defined as having a GPA of a 2.0 GPA or higher). This study found that students who were on
academic probation were more likely to have a low self-efficacy, were more likely to
embrace performance-avoidance goals, and were less likely to assume mastery goals.

**Components of Academic Intervention Programs for At-Risk Students**

Academic intervention programs are developed in an effort to assist at-risk
students to foster the development of strategies that will lead to academic success for the
at-risk student population. The primary goals of these intervention programs are
increased grade point averages and increased retention rates. However, the design and
implementation of academic intervention programs can differ tremendously. There is not
a definitive approach to the design and implementation of an academic intervention
program. Although many authors have reported success through the implementation of
their intervention programs, there is not one primary design for intervention programs.

In the development and implementation of an academic intervention program, it is
imperative to identify what led a student to academic difficulty in the first place. Kelley
(1996) suggested there are three phases of academic probation. In this proposed model,
the first stage is the precursors to academic probation. The factors contributing to
student’s academic performance are identified as either internal or external forces. Kelley
recommended evaluating the controllability of the internal precursors to academic
probation, which referred to whether or not the factors are easy to change. Controllable
factors include effort, values, and motivation. Uncontrollable factors include medical
conditions, learning disability, and ability. The stability of the external precursors to
academic probation should be evaluated to determine whether or not these factors are
likely to change.
Kelley (1996) recommended a preventative approach to academic probation, assessing various factors commonly identified to hamper a student’s academic performance. By implementing intervention strategies early, students can potentially avoid academic probation altogether. Intervention strategies need to be implemented for probationary students. However, Kelley acknowledged that one intervention strategy does not work for all probationary students. Common intervention strategies provided to probationary students, such as study skills presentations and time management workshops, only result in a high success rate when the student attributes his or her academic difficulties to controllable factors. However, if a student attributes his or her academic difficulty to a medical condition, for example, the student is not likely to have motivation or a sense of need for the workshops or mandatory study tables. Kelley suggested designing intervention programs for academic probationary students by having students make internal-controllable attributions, which encourages the students to take responsibility for their academics. By establishing a sense of responsibility and accountability, probationary students are more likely to seek out assistance or improve their study skills.

Academic intervention programs are continuously implemented at institutions. As stated previously, their design might differ from institution to institution. However, there are common frameworks of intervention programs for at-risk students that have evolved. The following paragraphs outline various components of academic intervention programs for at-risk students.
**Academic and Study Skills Courses**

With students hindered by prior academic difficulty, it is only natural to attribute their academic failure to study skills. Maybe students do not know how to implement techniques to succeed within the classroom environment. The instructional method and design of academic and study skills courses are comparable to what students have experienced in their other courses. It is easy to create an environment to practice the behaviors and approaches of successful students. The goal is to facilitate development of behaviors that will eventually become habitual in nature. The academic and study skills course also offers an environment for reflection by the students and a close connection between the students and members of the university community.

Kamphoff et al. (2007) suggested the implementation of a motivational/empowerment model in working with probationary students. The Strategies for Academic Success (SAS) program includes an 8-week course that is required of the probationary students. The goals of the program are for the participants to attain good academic standing, but also to act interdependently. Skip Downing’s text *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life* provided the foundation for the course. Four areas were attributed to the SAS program: personal responsibility, positive affirmations, goal setting/life planning, and self-management. The focus on probationary students working interdependently and developing a holistic perspective based on the four areas was what distinguished this intervention program from others.

Support was provided to the probationary students on a group and individual basis by a facilitator (Kamphoff et al., 2007). The probationary students were encouraged to
interact with their fellow peers who were also on probation as another means of support.

If the probationary students did not register for the program related course, they were immediately suspended. Students also encountered immediate suspension if they missed one of the course sessions associated with the SAS program. Two mandatory meetings with their instructor provided enhanced interaction and support. Required weekly journal entries provided a framework for student reflection.

Kamphoff et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative study in spring 2003 at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. There were 309 undergraduate students on academic probation (defined as having a GPA below a 1.50) enrolled in the SAS program and who participated in the study. Their academic performance was compared to the control group comprised of 80 undergraduate students who were on freshmen warning (defined as having a GPA between a 1.50 and 1.75) in spring 2003. An increase in both retention and in grade point average gains resulted for probationary students enrolled in the SAS program.

Patrick, Furlow, and Donovan (1988) conducted a quantitative study on the influence of the CORE Advising Program implemented at a regional campus of large, public institution. The sample population consisted of 88 freshman students who participated in the CORE Advising Program and 115 degree seeking non-CORE students. Patrick et al. suggested promoting a learner friendly environment through the creation of the CORE Advising Program. An academic advising team (CORE), which consisted of the director of Academic Affairs, two professional counselors, and six faculty members, was given the responsibility of designing a program to provide academic counseling to
high-risk students. The program was recommended for small campuses with less than 1,000 students. The CORE Advising Program was established based on the anticipated need for intervention strategies to assist the high percentage (approximately 46%) of academically underprepared students in the subject areas of Math and or English. The CORE Advising Program consisted of a freshman experience course in correlation with intensive academic advising. Placement scores were utilized as a determination of placement into the CORE Advising Program. The CORE Advising Program included extensive career counseling, class scheduling, educational planning, and a review of academic progress. Potential factors hampering academic success for high-risk students, including availability of childcare, transportation, nutrition, financial obstacles, family concerns, self-image, were proactively addressed. The program was considered a success based on the achieved grade point averages of participants compared to their predicted grade point averages, which were calculated through a regression equation including high school grade point average, verbal SAT score, and math SAT score. The retention rate of CORE Advising Program participants was comparable to non-CORE Advising Program participants.

Schultz, Dickman, Campbell, and Snow (1992) examined the impact of a participation in an academic skills course as a requirement of academic reinstatement for previously suspended students. The non-credit academic skills course met twice weekly for an entire semester. The course was instructed by academic counselors and trained graduate assistants. Course content included time management skills, study skills, academic planning, and career decision-making among others. In this quantitative study,
the first group of students \((n = 344)\) at a large, Southwestern institution who participated in the fall 1988 course was selected to enroll in the academic skills course based on advising staff recommendations after the review of their student record. A personal interview was also conducted in determining the reinstatement of students and their enrollment in the academic skills course.

The second group of students \((n = 241)\) was selected to enroll in the academic skills course in fall 1989. These participants were selected through the utilization of a scale based on grade point average and attempted credit hours. The implementation of this scale as a foundation for making reinstatement decisions increased the minimum standards for enrollment of reinstated students in the academic skills course.

Schultz et al. (1992) found enrollment in the academic skills course for reinstated students from either group did not have a significant impact on their semester and cumulative grade point averages. The results of the study also found grade point average prior to enrollment in the academic skills course was not a significant factor in determining academic success after the completion of the course. Schultz et al. recommended focusing on other interventions based on academic, environmental, and developmental factors in designing programming. These factors are detrimental to the academic success of students. When assessing the acceptance of previously suspended students in an academic intervention course or program, it is imperative to consider the aforementioned factors in their selection for academic reinstatement.
Lipsky and Ender (1990) examined the influence of enrollment in a one-credit hour student skills course on the academic success and retention rate of probationary students during a study conducted for two consecutive years. In 1985, 41 second-semester freshman probationary students and, in 1986, 54 second-semester freshman probationary students voluntarily participated in the study skills course at a medium-size, public institution located in western Pennsylvania. A comparison group \((n = 86 \text{ in 1985}; n = 173 \text{ in 1986})\) was formed by the freshman probationary students who elected not to enroll in the study skills course. Topics reviewed in the study skills course included goal setting, time management, listening and notetaking, test-taking strategies, and reading comprehension. The course focused on developing behaviors and attitudes attributed to academic success.

Lipsky and Ender (1990) found freshman probationary students enrolled in the study skills course earned significantly higher semester grade point averages than did students not participating in the study skills course. Students enrolled in the study skills course also earned more credit hours at the completion of the semester than did students who did not enroll in the study skills course. In regard to the number of credit hours attempted, there were no significant differences between the two groups of students with the exception of students enrolled in the study skills course during the second year of the study. These students attempted more credit hours \((M = 15.02)\) than the comparison group \((M = 13.91)\). Increased retention rates were achieved by students enrolled in the study skills course compared to students not enrolled in the study skills course.
**Academic Advising**

Academic advising is a common component of intervention programs. Earl (1988) provided a model of intrusive advising freshman probationary students implemented at Old Dominion University, which led to the identification of the students’ needs and the development of subsequent intervention strategies. Components of the intervention utilized within this model included intrusive mailings to all first semester students on probationary status due to their cumulative grade point average. Students were strongly encouraged to contact their academic counselor before the conclusion of the first week of classes during the following spring semester. There were no potential ramifications or consequences resulting from a student’s lack of consultation with his or her academic counselor. The students who consulted with their academic counselor were asked to complete a questionnaire during their meeting. This questionnaire inquired about the potential factors that influenced the student’s academic probationary status. With this information, the academic counselor engaged in a guided discussion, which resulted in the development of an action plan for the student. A successive meeting was scheduled between the student and academic counselor to review current academic progress and to discuss academic course planning for the following semester. The implemented intervention model resulted in higher grades and increased retention rates in contrast to a comparison group of probationary students not participating in the intervention program.

**Individual and Group Counseling**

Engle et al. (2004) conducted a quantitative study to examine the influence of participation in a retention program on the attrition, GPA, and self-esteem of academically
at-risk students. The sample population consisted of 91 academically at-risk students (defined as having a GPA between 1.25 and 2.00) at a middle-sized, comprehensive institution. Of this sample population, 45 at-risk students participated in the Preparation for Achieving Scholastic Success (P.A.S.S.) retention program. The control group was comprised of 46 at-risk students who chose not to participate in the P.A.S.S. retention program. Engle et al. found academically at-risk students, identified by their academic probationary status at the institution, who voluntarily participated in the P.A.S.S. retention program achieved a higher semester grade point average and a higher percentage of students were retained the following semester after participation in the P.A.S.S. program participants of the comparison group. The P.A.S.S. retention program required individual and group counseling, which addressed study strategies, test-taking, career decision-making, motivation, stress management, time management, university resources, and communication skills.

**Mandatory Study Sessions**

Foreman, Wilkie, and Keilen (1990) examined the program effectiveness of the Study Acceleration: Gaining Excellence (SAGE) program, which enrolled students of all academic levels, who were listed as probationary status. The SAGE program required participants to attend 6 hours of structured study sessions overseen by faculty and staff. Peer tutoring was an option for participants. Faculty and staff provided presentations on study skills to SAGE participants on a bi-weekly basis. The study was conducted at a small, liberal arts institution. Data were collected over three years by examining academic records, administering a survey, and collecting written evaluations. The sample
size was 330 students. Participants of the program identified a high level of satisfaction with most of the components of the SAGE program on the student evaluations. Participants felt the structured study sessions were beneficial and aided in the enhancement of time management and organizational skills. The participants identified the discussions with the faculty and staff members associated with the SAGE program as helpful. There was much support among participants to continue the SAGE program. The only component of the SAGE program that was rated negatively were the bi-weekly study-skills presentations, which half of the participants did not find helpful.

**Group Advising Sessions**

Austin, Cherney, Crowner, and Hill (1997) found the Forum group advising sessions were a significant retention tool at Michigan State University. In fall 1994, students on academic probation at the conclusion of previous spring semester \( n = 500 \) were given the option to participate in the Forum group advising sessions or meet with their advisors individually. The Forum sessions provided an environment for probationary students to assess their academic status and prior academic achievement. They also identified potential factors that influenced their level of prior academic achievement. During small group sessions in which advisors served as facilitators, probationary students conversed about their similar barriers to academic success.

Obstacles identified by participants included not attending class, insufficient amount of time placed toward studying, lackluster time management skills, and lack of understanding of written material. The lack of a supportive relationship with faculty
instructors and their perceived dissatisfaction with teaching were also identified as barriers. The participants established goals.

A second Forum session was offered to probationary students during the spring 1995 semester. Participants of this study who attended the Forum group advising sessions and met individually with their advisors experienced the highest overall GPA improvement compared to students who selected to participate in either the Forum group advising session or to meet individually with their advisors. The probationary students who did not engage in any of the interventions experienced the lowest increase in overall GPA improvement.

Humphrey (2006) examined the small group sessions offered to probationary students through Project Success at Virginia Tech in a longitudinal quantitative study. This intervention program was offered on a voluntary, weekly group intervention program for probationary students. Project Success focused on the development of a sound support system and accountability on the part of the probationary students over the course of three semesters. Humphrey compared the semester GPA, cumulative GPA, and percentage of students who returned to good standing of the participants in Project Success \( n = 147 \) and a control group of probationary students who did not participate in Project Success. Humphrey stressed the importance of the involvement of the campus community in the success of the intervention programs for probationary students.

**Multi-Faceted Intervention Programs**

Multi-faceted intervention programs are a mixture of numerous academic intervention strategies combined together. An argument for this approach in designing an
academic intervention program is this will address a variety of factors and issues that could plague the academic success of students all at once. This is intrusive and exactly what at-risk students need to get them back on the right path toward the road of academic success. Critics would argue that a multi-faceted academic intervention program is complex and extensive. Students would get lost in the requirements for the program. Having the students complete all of the requirements of a multi-faceted intervention program might leave students confused and irritated if they are unable to identify the connection between their academic success and the requirements for the academic intervention program.

Garnett (1990) described a retention strategy, Students in Retention (SIR), for probationary and first-time suspended students implemented at Henderson State University, a public, liberal arts institution. The exact number of participants in the SIR program was not specifically stated in the description of the quantitative study. All students participating in SIR were required to attend a mandatory advising session with an academic advisor. At that time, the student is familiarized with the requirements of SIR. These requirements include two counseling visits to the Counseling Center during the semester, three meetings with an academic advisor during the semester, and a weekly submission of a report that outlines the activities completed by the student throughout the week. Garnett suggested that the requirements of the SIR program promoted an environment of structure, which fostered the development of discipline and responsibility. An agreement of the completion of all requirements associated with the SIR program is signed by each student. The implementation of the SIR program led to 50% of the SIR
participants earning a 2.0 semester grade point average or higher during their initial semester in the SIR program. This was a significant increase compared to a prior semester before the implementation of the SIR program in which only 20% of SIR participants earned a 2.0 semester grade point average or higher.

Heisserer and Parrette (2002) suggested various intrusive strategies to target the at-risk student population based on a review of prior literature. Recommendations included the development of a comprehensive plan of action signed by the student; enhanced faculty and advisor training to enhance the academic advising of at-risk students; development of on-line resources specifically for at-risk students to offer support and enhance communication; data collection of pertinent information regarding the at-risk student population; and the continued evaluation and assessment of implemented intrusive intervention strategies on student retention and student satisfaction.

Conclusion

Prior research studies have been conducted to determine the factors influencing the academic success of probationary students, including academically reinstated students. Other studies have focused on the variations in models of academic intervention programs developed to provide support in the presence of academic difficulties experienced by the probationary student population. This study focuses solely on academically reinstated students. With a greater insight into the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students, a better understanding of this student population will be developed. This knowledge will help to guide the design and implementation of interventions and support
services to academically reinstated students. The following section outlines the methodology of this research study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explored the needs and experience of reinstated students participating in an academic intervention program. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influenced the decision to apply for reinstatement of previously academically dismissed students and to examine how participation in an academic intervention program assists academically reinstated students to succeed upon reinstatement. A review of the methodology, participants and setting, data collection procedures, and strategies for data analysis were provided within this chapter.

Qualitative Case Study Design

I engaged in naturalistic inquiry through the implementation of qualitative methods of data collection in the development of a case study. A social constructivist perspective was assumed, in which learning is attributed to one’s social environment and those with whom he or she interacts (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism helped in generating a sense of the participants’ reality. As phrased by Gee (1991), “‘Reality’ (experience, facts) is the very act of our describing it” (p. 8). Participants’ perspectives resulted in the cultivation of the meanings of their reality through their experiences (Creswell, 2009). According to Gee (1991):

Thus social theories are, or should be, first, explanations of how the beliefs and values people have, and the choices they have made, sustain and constitute a certain set of social relations between people, whether or not they are consciously
aware that their beliefs, values and choices have this effect, and whether or not they intend this effect; and second, proposals of possible worlds (new realities) that will make for a more humane and just set of social relationships between people, and proposals for realizing them. (p. 9)

Creswell (2009) mentioned, “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Naturalistic inquiry is focused on “capturing program processes, documenting variations, and exploring important individual differences between various participants’ experiences and outcomes” (Patton, 1987, p. 14).

Case study was the strategy of inquiry selected for this study. Stake (1995) provided three characteristics of case study research. First, a case can be termed as a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The needs and experiences of academically reinstated students participating in the Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP) program was the case for the purposes of this study. Secondly, Stake stated cases are bound by time and activity. The LEAP program was bound by the activities required, which began in the summer and continued until the end of the fall semester. Lastly, detailed data were collected through various data collection methods over a definitive period of time (Stake, 1995). I collected data for this study by conducting individual qualitative face-to-face interviews with each participant and by analyzing documents, including reinstatement applications, reinstatement letters, and journal reflections. Archival records, such as academic transcripts, were also analyzed.
As Yin (1984) stated, “the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 14). Case studies “provide more valid portrayals, better basis for personal understanding of what is going on, and solid grounds for considering action” (Stake, 1981, p. 32). Yin (1984) stated, “‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are likely to favor the use of case studies, experiments, or histories” (p. 19), as is the case in this study in regard to one of the central research questions: How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to succeed after academic reinstatement? However, Yin acknowledged what questions can be used in case studies to explore, as is the circumstance in this study in regard to one of the central research questions: What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed?

**Researcher’s Role**

I worked in the capacity of an academic advisor for four years within the Student Advising Center, which was housed in the College of Undergraduate Studies. I served as a committee member on the probation/dismissal/reinstatement (PDR) committee. I was also asked to serve on a committee to redesign the structure of the LEAP program. Through these professional experiences, I developed an immense interest in working with reinstated students due to the academic obstacles they encountered during their journey in earning a college education. I listened to their stories as they described the barriers that hampered their previous academic performance. I was intrigued by the academically reinstated students’ decision to return to the same institution in which they were
previously academically dismissed. I was also concerned about the availability of adequate resources to support their return to college. This specific large, public, mid-western, four-year institution was selected due to the administration of the select academic intervention program being studied. The confidentiality of participants was ensured through the completion of consent forms.

Due to my previous experiences of working with members of the reinstated student population, I brought certain biases to this study. Although much effort was made to remain objective, I acknowledge that these biases could have influenced the manner in which data were analyzed and interpreted. During this research study, I only served in the capacity of interviewer. The advising responsibilities with members of the participant pool that I had prior to the commencement of this research study ceased. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the institution at which this research was conducted granted approval prior to the beginning of this study. The Dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies gave permission prior to the beginning of this study, permitting access to the academic transcripts, reinstatement applications, and reinstatement letters previously composed by the participants of this study.

**Design of the Study**

This study was conducted at a large, public, mid-western, four-year institution. Multiple sources of data were gathered. The primary data source was collected from two separate face-to-face individual interviews with six participants. Documents, including reinstatement applications, reinstatement letters, and journal reflections, were collected and analyzed. Academic transcripts were reviewed to gather a thorough understanding of
the participants’ prior academic record, which led to their previous academic dismissal. Documented observations of the behavior and activities of the students in the LEAP program half-day group session provided a first-hand experience with the students.

**Participants in the Study**

The participant pool in this study was limited to the previously academically dismissed students who were granted academic reinstatement through the College of Undergraduate Studies at a large, public, mid-western, four-year institution for the fall 2009 semester. All students who were granted reinstatement by the reinstatement committee were listed as an exploratory major, regardless of the major in which they were declared at the time of academic dismissal. The LEAP program was developed and implemented by the College of Undergraduate Studies, which housed the exploratory major. Students who applied for reinstatement through the College of Undergraduate Studies desired to return to college as an exploratory major. Based on the number of students reinstated to the College of Undergraduate Studies in recent years, I estimated the total number of reinstated students was approximately 20 students. Of these, 6 reinstated students were sought, using maximum variation sampling, as participants in this study.

All reinstated students, including the 6 reinstated students participating in this study, were required to complete the half-day group session as part of the LEAP program. The reinstated students had the option to participate in three additional advising sessions. Academic advisors were active in contacting students via e-mail, the institution’s primary form of communication, as a means to touch base with the reinstated students. A framework for attending advising sessions was provided to the reinstated students in an
effort to better assist students throughout the semester. The first advising session was designed to help the student plan for improvements in his or her academic performance during the first 5 weeks of the semester. The second advising session was designed to review the student’s academic performance during the semester and to outline academic courses and endeavors for the following semester. The final advising session was a conversation between the student and his or her advisor to prepare the student for the following semester, which lacks the structure of the LEAP program.

Findings from this study contributed to gaining a better understanding of the holistic influence of participation in the LEAP program on academically reinstated students and providing crucial insight of the resources, interventions, and programs that might be helpful for future academically reinstated students.

A purposive sampling strategy, maximum variation sampling, was utilized. Merriam (1988) stated, “Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 48). As Patton (1990) described, maximum variation sampling is used with small sample sizes in which “a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other” (p. 172). Maximum variation sampling “aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation” (p. 172). In this sampling strategy, diversification of participants’ characteristics is identified. Maximum variation sampling assists in achieving diversification within the small sample, resulting in findings that are “high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for
documenting uniqueness” (p. 172). The findings from this data collection also depict “important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (p. 172). Through maximum variation sampling, I identified the variations and differences among the group members, while searching for commonalities among their experiences.

For the purposes of this study, the following characteristics were used to guide the purposeful sampling to include all of the extremes within this population of participants:

1. **Length of time since academic dismissal** was used to select the reinstated students with the least and most amount of time since dismissal within the sample pool.

2. **Cumulative grade point average at the time of academic dismissal** was used to select the reinstated students with the highest and lowest cumulative grade point averages prior to academic dismissal within the sample pool.

3. **Class standing** was used to select a freshman reinstated student and a sophomore reinstated student within the sample pool.

In regard to class standing as a characteristic of sampling, Hall and Gahn (1994) found that previously dismissed sophomores and juniors were more likely to enhance their academic performance and achieve academic progress upon reinstatement compared to reinstated freshmen and seniors. Based on this research finding, a freshman reinstated student and a sophomore reinstated student were selected to provide varying perspectives of a student who was least likely to succeed academically (freshman) and a student who was most likely to achieve academic success (sophomore).
Some of the aforementioned characteristics utilized in the creation of criterion for sampling were attributed to the same participant. I remained cognizant of age, gender, and race in the sampling procedures as to target a sample participant pool reflective of the demographic profile of the larger population of LEAP participants. The demographic information was available in July 2009 once the decisions pertaining to academic reinstatement were determined. Table 2 provides the demographic profile of all academically reinstated students who participated in the LEAP program. The characteristics used to guide the sampling were bolded in an effort to include all of the extremes based on the prior research that had previously been conducted.

It is important to reiterate that the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students participating in the LEAP program was the case in this study. As stated by Merriam (1988), “Selecting the case to be investigated involves understanding that the case is a single unit or a bounded system within which there may be numerous situations, participants, events, or phases of a process” (p. 52). In this study, the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students participating in the LEAP program are investigated through the examination of experiences of the 6 participants. Maximum variation sampling was implemented to obtain a diverse sample population, which allotted the opportunity to gather a well-rounded understanding of the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students participating in the LEAP program by listening to their personal stories related to their academic journey. The participants were not considered to be individual cases within this study. Therefore, because this study did not include multiple case studies, a cross-case analysis was not warranted.
Table 2

Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>Cumulative GPA</th>
<th>Time Since Dismissal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Scott)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Courtney)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Amber)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Brooke)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Elizabeth)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>8.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Sam)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No Report</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Yin (1984) stated “six sources of evidence can be the focus of data collection for case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 79). Patton (1990) noted, “By using a
variety of sources and resources, the evaluator-observer can build on the strengths of each
type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach” (p. 245).
The following paragraphs outline the data collection process for this study. See Table 3
for a summary of the components of the data collection process.

Table 3

Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
<th>Date of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic transcripts</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reinstatement applications and letters</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First interviews</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of half-day group session</td>
<td>August 27, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal reflections</td>
<td>August 27, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second interviews</td>
<td>November 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic transcripts</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews are “one of the most important sources of case study information” (Yin,
1984, p. 82). Limitations of participant interviews are distortion of the perspective of the
participant based on feelings and emotions (Patton, 1990). Other limitations to participant
interviews are “recall error, reactivity of the interviewee to the interviewer, and
self-serving responses” (Patton, 1990, p. 245). The primary data source was the
information collected from the participants’ interviews. I conducted the interviews in a
private conference area in the Student Advising Center. The interviews were
semi-structured, audio-taped 30-minute interviews, which were subsequently transcribed and analyzed thereafter. Two separate face-to-face individual interviews with six participants were conducted. A paid professional transcriptionist transcribed both interviews. The first individual interview was conducted in August 2009 prior to the LEAP Program (Appendix C). This interview addressed the first central research question of this study: What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed? The second individual interview conducted in November 2009 after all of the requirements of the LEAP program were concluded (Appendix D). This interview addressed the second central question of this study: How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to improve their academic performance after academic reinstatement? The second interview provided an opportunity to clarify any discrepancies from the prior interview.

The secondary data sources were documents, including

1. Reinstatement applications and reinstatement letters previously composed by the participants of this study. These documents were analyzed in August 2009.

2. Journal reflections completed by each participant at the end of the half-day required group session in August 2009 (Appendix E). The hand-written journal reflections provided another source of data at the time in which the information was current.

Yin (1984) acknowledged, “documents can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources; if the documentary evidence is contradictory
rather than corroboratory, the case study investigator has specific reason to inquire further into the topic” (p. 80). Patton (1990) supported the analysis of documents in case study research due to the “behind-the-scenes look at the program that may not be directly observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through the documents” (p. 245). Criticism has developed surrounding the utilization of documents in case study research due to concerns of over dependency on such sources of information (Yin, 1984). Variations in the quality of the documents have also been criticized (Patton, 1990, p. 245). For the purposes of this study, documents served as a secondary source of insight into the participants’ perspectives surrounding their previous academic failures and recent academic reinstatement. Information from the documents assisted in gathering clarification during the interviews. For instance, the application for reinstatement asked the previously dismissed student to identify factors contributing to his or her previous performance at the institution. This documented information was referenced during the interview to gather further insight into the circumstances that contributed to the student’s prior academic difficulty and subsequent academic dismissal.

The entire academic transcript of each student participating in this study was analyzed during the study. The academic transcripts provided useful information pertaining to the participant’s prior academic record such as grade level, cumulative grade point average, and length of time since academic dismissal. Patton (1990) acknowledged the potential for incomplete or inaccurate recordkeeping. Yin (1984) expressed concern regarding the relevance of the archival evidence to case study research. Archival data
were relevant to this study and would only enhance the data collected because it provided data demonstrating the prior academic experience of the student. The information provided on the academic transcript also provided a point of comparison for the student’s academic progress after being academically reinstated.

During the half-day group session of the LEAP program, I took fieldnotes of the direct observation of the behavior and activities of the students. I assumed the role of observer as participant, in which my observations as a researcher were known to the students (Merriam, 1988, p. 93). I solely observed without participation in any aspect of the LEAP program. As stated by Merriam, “Observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study” (p. 89). For the purposes of this study, I felt that the direct observation of the half-day group session of the LEAP program, in addition to the interviews conducted and the documents analyzed provided a comprehensive understanding of the students’ experiences upon academic reinstatement.

A thorough description of each individual participating in the study was also provided. As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested, I kept analytic memos to develop my analytic ideas in detail about what I learned from the data I collected. A researcher journal also documented the detailed outline of the research study, providing another source of reflection and insight. All information and data pertaining to this research study were kept in a private office to ensure privacy.
Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedures

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) described data analysis as “working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (p. 147). Qualitative case study is comprised of direct interpretation of the data, as “the qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully” (Stake, 1995, p. 75). As Merriam (1988) suggested, the data will be analyzed as it is collected to ensure that the data “are both parsimonious and illuminating” (p. 124). Stake (1995) further explained, “The search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call ‘correspondence’” (p. 78). I read the individual interview transcripts and observation fieldnotes thoroughly and repeatedly, taking notes on “the topics that occur and individual aspects of these which can be related —in a very broad sense—to the context of the research question(s)” (Schmidt, 2004, p. 254).

Index cards were used to collect the units of information. As suggested by Merriam (1988), these units of information, which could be a phrase, single sentence, or multiple sentences listed on each index card, “should reveal information relevant to the study and stimulate the reader to think beyond the particular bit of information” (p. 132). As described by Merriam:

Each unit of information is coded according to basic identifying factors such as person interviewed, date of observation, and so on. The cards are then sorted into piles by constantly comparing the information on one card with the information on
the next. The piles are labeled and the cards within that pile are coded accordingly. Once all the cards have been coded, cards relevant to a certain category can be retrieved by the code on the card. (p. 138)

Coding “means relating particular passages in the text of an interview to one category, in the version that best fits these textual passages” (Schmidt, 2004, p. 255).

Each code identified was written in the top left corner of the index card. I used a different color of index card for each participant. On the back of each index card, I listed the interview number (first or second interview) and page number of the transcription in which the phrase, single sentence, or paragraph occurred. This assisted me in order to easily locate the information within the transcription when needed.

Once all of the interviews, documents, and observations were coded, I compared each code to the other codes previously identified in order “to create chunks of data from smaller bits, fit pieces together, and build larger and related constructs” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 173). Patterns were generated through the coding of data collected. The previously developed codes led to the generation of “salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 114). Patton (1987) referred to this as inductive analysis, meaning “that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being decided prior to data collection and analysis” (p. 150). As mentioned by Miles and Huberman (1994), “In a more inductive study, it helps to look for recurring phrases or common threads in informants’ accounts or, alternatively, for internal differences that you or informants have noted” (p. 70).
As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) stated, “Data interpretation refers to developing ideas about your findings and relating them to the literature and to broader concerns and concepts” (p. 147). After coding the data collected, I interpreted the data to determine the lessons that I learned from this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The lessons were found in various forms such as through the development of personal interpretations, the comparison to prior research, and the generation of new questions (Creswell, 2009). I described my personal interpretations of the data. I also compared the findings with the prior research conducted, documented previously in the literature review. Although the concepts of the individual themes remained the same, the titles of the themes adjusted slightly as I compared the findings to prior research and further reflected on my personal interpretation of the findings. Finally, I posed new questions that surfaced through the data and analysis of this study.

The process of data analysis was informed by established methods of qualitative inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In response to the first research question (What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed?), my coding of the data identified 6 themes: role of family, role of peers, role of a second chance opportunity, role of stipulations associated with the completion of a college degree, role of person’s perceived self-efficacy, and role of person’s self-worth.

For research question two (How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to improve their academic performance after academic reinstatement?), the
coding process generated 4 themes: students’ awareness of resources, students’ knowledge of strategies for academic success, student notions of not being alone, and student perceptions of academic advising.

Verification

Merriam (1988) stated, “Internal validity deals with the question of how one’s findings match reality. Do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring?” (pp. 166-167). Merriam suggested six techniques to maintain internal validity, including triangulation, member-checking, long-term observation at the research site or repeated observations of the same phenomenon, peer examination, participatory modes of research, and researcher’s biases. Triangulation was also used to ensure internal validity through the gathering of data from multiple sources, including interviews, documents, and archival records. Internal validity was ensured through member-checking, which served as a technique to confirm accuracy of the data collected from the participant interviews.

Within two months of each interview conducted, a copy of the interview transcriptions were e-mailed to the interviewee to confirm the accuracy of the information collected. In addition to the two scheduled interviews with each participant in this study, follow-up interviews with the participant were conducted if further clarification was needed. A peer examiner, who was not a part of this study and who was a Ph.D. candidate, contributed to the accuracy of the study by reviewing the study and posing questions for clarification.

At the conclusion of the study, the peer examiner provided feedback on the data collected and the categories and themes that emerged from the data. The peer examiner did not
co-analyze the data collected. Rather, the peer examiner’s feedback was a means to ensure that my analytic interpretation of the “account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). Finally, the clarification of the bias that I brought to the study was documented previously.

According to Merriam (1988), “Reliability refers to the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results?” (p. 170). Merriam suggested several techniques to maintain reliability, including offering an explanation of my assumptions, triangulation, and providing an audit trail of the methods used to conduct the research study. I thoroughly explained my assumptions prior to conducting this study. I provided a rich, detailed description of the participants in this study. I described the social context that framed my collected data (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Reliability was also ensured through the triangulation of the data through the multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, documents, and archival records. Finally, I thoroughly documented the data collection process, how categories were derived, and my decision-making process throughout the research study.

As Yin (1984) suggested, “A good guideline for doing case studies is therefore to conduct the research so that an auditor could repeat the procedures and arrive at the same results” (p. 45). In an effort to ensure accuracy and reliability, I reviewed interview transcripts for any mistakes made during transcription. Also, codes were cross-checked and analytic memo-writing provided a resource for codes and their appropriate definitions.

Merriam (1988) noted, “External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. That is, how generalizable are the
results of a research study?” (p. 173). A limitation of this study was the generalizability of the findings to other programs, situations, or student populations. However, the goal of qualitative research is not generalizability, but instead particularity (Creswell, 2009). As stated by Creswell, “The value of qualitative research lies in the particular description and themes developed in context of a specific site” (p. 193). Although generalizability was not a goal of this study, the detailed, rich descriptions documentation gathered were useful to others “so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 124-125). I provided thorough descriptions of the data collection process and findings to outline the groundwork for the transferability of the findings, which was dependent upon the similarity and applicability of the particular situation.

**Reporting the Findings**

Merriam (1988) acknowledged the lack of a standard approach to reporting the findings of case study research. According to Merriam, “The contents of a case study report depend on the audience’s interest as well as the investigator’s purpose in doing the research in the first place” (p. 194). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified five components of a case study report. First, an understanding of the problem and a description of how this problem led to this research study were provided. A rich description of the setting was provided, specifically describing the specific elements of the LEAP program. Lincoln and Guba noted, “A thorough description of the transactions or processes observed in that context” were presented (p. 362). Various elements studied thoroughly
throughout this study were discussed. Finally, I outlined the “lessons to be learned” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 362).

**Summary**

This naturalistic case study focused on the needs and experience of reinstated students participating in an academic intervention program. For this study, I assumed a social constructivist perspective, relying heavily on the perspectives of the participants of the academic intervention program to cultivate meanings of their experiences. Interviews, documents, archival records, and observation were used during the data collection process. Data analysis occurred through the implementation of the inductive analysis as the data were coded and patterns were identified, which led to the generation of themes. Rich, detailed descriptions of the participants’ experiences provided the framework of this research study.
CHAPTER IV
OVERVIEW OF LEAP PROGRAM AND CASE SUMMARIES OF PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to identify the factors that influenced the decision of previously academically dismissed students to apply for reinstatement and to examine how participation in an academic intervention program assists academically reinstated students to succeed after reinstatement.

The participants of this study were previously academically dismissed students, each of whom were granted reinstatement as exploratory majors for the fall 2009 semester through the College of Undergraduate Studies at Moreland University (pseudonym), a large, public, mid-western, four-year institution. A total of 16 students were granted academic reinstatement and participated in the Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP) program. Through maximum variation sampling, the variations and differences among the group members were identified, while searching for commonalities among their experiences. Of the 16 students, 6 were selected to participate in the study. In addition to the three individual advising sessions that were strongly encouraged, all exploratory reinstated students were required to participate in a mandatory half-day group session. An overview of the LEAP academic intervention program is provided later in this chapter.

I chose to present each participant profile individually. I created a clear distinction between the information gathered from the reinstatement letters, the two individual
qualitative face-to-face interviews, and the academic transcripts. I felt this distinction was important in demonstrating the variation in information provided by the participant in the reinstatement letter versus the information obtained through the two individual meetings with the participant. This approach also helped in identifying the information obtained from the academic transcript at the conclusion of the semester.

**Program Description of the Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP)**

**Reinstatement Intervention Program**

The Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP) Reinstatement Intervention program was an academic intervention program for exploratory reinstated students. The LEAP program included a mandatory half-day group session, which was held on Thursday, August 27, 2009. The exploratory reinstated students were also strongly encouraged to attend three additional individual advising sessions.

Three academic advisors who worked in the Student Advising Center in the College of Undergraduate Studies facilitated the mandatory half-day group session. Each reinstated student was given a folder, which included all of the handouts that would be referenced throughout the day. The agenda provided the structured schedule of the mandatory half-day group session (Appendix F). The session began with introductions of the facilitators. The goals of the half-day group session and the overall LEAP program were conveyed to the reinstated students. The goals included helping students to identify the issues, situations, and obstacles that contributed to the academic situation of the reinstated students; assisting students in identifying goals that would counteract these past issues, situations, and obstacles allowing the reinstated students to achieve success.
academically and personally; and aiding students in the development of a strategy plan of academic success through the utilization of available resources and services at the institution. During the half-day group session, reinstated students were engaged in reflection, shared their personal academic experiences, and developed their plans for academic success.

The assistant dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies greeted the LEAP attendees during the opening of the session. His message was that, regardless of intentions, students encounter obstacles outside of the classroom that could hamper their ability to succeed in college. How these obstacles are addressed determine a student’s ability to succeed in college. He wanted the LEAP attendees to know that they did not have to walk this academic journey alone. There are resources and services to help them. Finally, this is their one chance to be academically reinstated at Moreland University.

The LEAP attendees were given 30 minutes to complete the first reflection assignment (Appendix G). They were then placed into small groups for 30 minutes to share their prior academic experiences (as they felt comfortable) and to strategize how they could be successful during their first semester after being academically reinstated. Their conversation was guided by the reflection assignment. A facilitator sat with each small group to observe and to assist with the progression of the discussion (if needed).

Goal setting and time management handouts were provided and explained to the reinstated students. These handouts were a resource that they could reference during the activity session at the end of the half-day group session or on their own time. The grade goal setting plan handout (Appendix H) helped students to set academic goals. A weekly
schedule handout (Appendix I) was provided to assist students in outlining their schedules to better manage their time. A monthly calendar for the fall 2009 semester (Appendix J) was also provided. This calendar included important dates as outlined in the academic calendar. The calendar highlighted when students were encouraged to meet with their academic advisor for the three advising sessions that were encouraged as part of the LEAP program. It also outlined registration dates for spring 2010 semester courses.

Representatives from the campus community agreed to participate in the “Successful Second Chance” panel discussion, which was allotted 30 minutes. The panel members were given a list of panel discussion questions (Appendix K) to help guide the discussion and a facilitator moderated the discussion. The panel consisted of four members. The first panelist was a staff member from the Academic Success Center. She was responsible for overseeing the supplemental instruction (group tutoring component for courses) program. The second panelist was a clinical psychologist from the Health Center. He was responsible for addressing student mental health concerns and issues. The third panelist was a career counselor in the Career Services Center. She was responsible for addressing the needs of students and alumni related to careers and employment. She also taught a course on career exploration at the institution. The fourth panelist was the academic program and student development coordinator from the College of Undergraduate Studies. She also worked as an academic coach for exploratory majors to help in the selection of a major based on their interests, skills, and values. The panel members shared their professional experiences in addressing the needs of students from the perspective of their own roles within the institution. They also explained their
personal experiences and the obstacles they encountered as students in their pursuit of their own educational goals.

At the conclusion of the panel discussion, which ended with a question and answer segment for students, the LEAP half-day group session transitioned to the activity component. The reinstated students were given the opportunity to select what they would like to complete during this 30-minute session. During this time, the reinstated students were able to meet separately or in small groups with the individual panel members. A resource table was provided for LEAP attendees to gather materials for various departments and services across campus that could assist in their return to school. The facilitators for the half-day group session were available to meet with the reinstated students individually or in small groups to guide them through the grade goal setting and time management activities previously given to them as assignments.

The LEAP half-day group session concluded with the LEAP journal reflection (Appendix L). The facilitators were available to respond to inquiries from the reinstated students at the end of the session. Panel members also addressed individual questions and concerns from the LEAP attendees.

In addition to the mandatory half-day group session, the final components of the LEAP academic intervention program were the three encouraged advising sessions by the reinstated students. It was suggested that the students schedule the first advising session with their assigned academic advisor during weeks 3–5 of the fall 2009 semester. This session addressed the student’s plan for improvements in his or her academic progress. The second advising session was encouraged to be scheduled during weeks 7–10 of the
fall 2009 semester and addressed class registration for the spring 2010 semester and the student’s academic progress. The third advising session was encouraged to be scheduled between weeks 12–13 of the fall 2009 semester and addressed the student’s transition into the upcoming spring 2010 semester. Academic advisors were active in attempting to communicate with all reinstated students via e-mail, the institution’s primary form of communication, as a means to follow up with them.

**Case Summaries**

The case summaries include details of the study participants, specially focusing on the following five areas: (a) what factors contributed to their prior poor academic performance; (b) rationale of why they applied for academic reinstatement; (c) their academic experience during the first semester upon academic reinstatement; (d) how their experience in the Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP) program assisted them after their return to college; and (e) the final term GPA, cumulative GPA, and academic status after academic reinstatement. The information provided in each case summary is presented in the manner in which they were collected. Each participant is briefly introduced. Information from the participant’s reinstatement letter, first interview, second interview, and academic transcripts was presented individually thereafter.

**Profiles of Study Participants**

**Case Summary #1: Amber.** Amber, a Caucasian female who lived in a northeast, mid-western, college town since birth, was 20 years old at the time of this study. She previously attended Moreland University for one term and was academically dismissed at the end of the semester due to her poor academic performance. At that time, students
were automatically dismissed if they earned a first term GPA of a 0.00. Amber was dismissed at the end of her first semester with a cumulative GPA of a 0.00.

**Reinstatement letter.** I was introduced to Amber through her reinstatement letter, submitted on May 19, 2009. Amber described her prior attendance at Moreland University. However, her description of her prior attendance was limited to her work experience at two different locations on campus during her freshman year of college. This was definitely an area I wanted to gather a better understanding of during our future conversations.

Amber briefly highlighted factors that she felt contributed to her poor academic experience. She described her “severe depression and lack of enthusiasm,” her parents’ recent divorce, and her movement between two homes. Amber stated, “The reason for this [severe depression and lack of enthusiasm] was due to my parent’s [sic] recent divorce and the fact that I was living at both their homes instead of being allowed to live on campus as I wanted to.” She felt that she did not have a strong connection to the university. Her lack of connection to the institution was also hindered by the fact that she was not allowed to reside on campus, which “caused me to wake up every morning and not want to go to class because I did not have the physical connection to the university.”

Amber was much more detailed in outlining why she decided to apply for academic reinstatement. “School is very important in this day and age and I feel that I have now come to understand that more than ever,” Amber stated. Returning to school was a means “to begin my life how I want it to be from here on out” and to work hard “at what ever major I decide I want to pursue.” Amber felt by returning to school and living
on campus, she would address her housing concerns of living between her father’s and her mother’s house that she experienced during her previous attendance in college. She referred to her decision to apply for academic reinstatement as a “new beginning.” Amber viewed living on campus as an opportunity to be surrounded by other college students who would assist her “to balance my time and focus on my goals and help me achieve them.”

First interview. My first interview with Amber was conducted on August 25, 2009. She arrived wearing a wrinkled black t-shirt with red print depicting the name of the Columbus College of Art & Design. The color of her t-shirt appeared to be faded from frequent wear. She greeted me politely, grasping my hand in a firm handshake. Amber quickly placed her hands back into the pockets of her long plaid shorts that hung just below her knees. The sound of her flips flops echoed through the vacant hallway as we approached our small meeting room. As she sat down, I realized that Amber’s straight brown hair was still very damp from being washed. Her hair fell around her face that was completely absent of makeup. She peered through her maroon glasses, attempting to make little direct eye contact with me, and appearing uncertain of what our conversation might address.

Amber was raised in a Jewish family, which consisted of her father, mother, and a brother who was five years older than her. Her mother was a high school art teacher and her father was a mechanic at a large manufacturing business. Amber stated that she struggled in high school. As Amber discussed her high school experience, she continued to make minimal eye contact. She gazed around the small interview room, rubbing the
palms of her hands continuously in a wringing motion. She would continue this hand motion throughout our entire conversation. As she slouched down in her chair, her legs were spread apart in front of her and her flip flops were planted firmly on the ground. She described her life as a varsity athlete in high school, commenting in a near gloatng tone, “I was one of those kids where I played sports and I was in the band. And, so, I kind of did what I had to so that they couldn’t pull me [from participating in her extracurricular activities].” It became evident that Amber’s high school experience was completed by minimal effort. She came from an environment in which she felt a sense of entitlement, almost bragging as she commented, “I knew I got away with a lot of stuff because I was a varsity athlete.” Amber smirked as she reflected on her life during high school as a varsity athlete. This was the first sign of any emotion during our conversation.

Amber began to provide a framework of her living arrangements during high school and college. Amber’s parents divorced when she was a sophomore in high school. Amber stated that she lived “between my mom and my dad’s house” during her high school years. She did not refer to either residence as home. She chose to live with her mother during her senior year of high school. After she graduated from high school, she lived with her father when she started college.

Although Amber talked with little visible or audible emotion during our entire meeting, her words depicted frustration about her living situation. Amber stated, “They [her parents] made me stay at home. They wouldn’t let me live on campus, so I couldn’t get away from all the drama [referring to the divorce].” Amber was quite detailed
regarding the immense inconvenience on her part of living at her father’s house during her first semester of college, stating,

They had me live at home the first time [freshman year of college], so it was a matter of having to get up, get on a bus, and come to school . . . it just felt like I was in high school and so I just didn’t care.

At one point, Amber stated that attending college was like going on a field trip as she had done so many times before because she was raised in the same town in which Moreland University was located. She wanted “the college experience,” which she equated to the following:

Having everything here, like the library being open all day, to, like, actually go do work. You know, meeting people on campus and not just waking up, going to class and going home. Like, having to interact with people and having to, like, be here all the time will allow me to, like, have more access to, like, all my options for, like, doing better and not being, like, you know, having to go home every day.

The obvious issue to the aforementioned statement was that Amber still had access to all of the same opportunities that she affiliated with the college experience while she resided off campus at her father’s house.

As Amber provided a description of her frustrations with her living arrangements during her previous first semester of college, she also attributed her academic failures to her living situation. Amber stated, “My dad worked all of the time. So, he was never home to tell me whether or not, you know, when I would have to get up for school. He was gone. So, it didn’t really matter.” This statement highlighted the lack of Amber’s
accountability, which was regularly echoed throughout my conversation with her. The previous statement also demonstrated Amber’s lack of class attendance during her previous first semester of college, which was another factor that attributed to her prior academic failure.

Amber reflected on her prior experience at Moreland University. Education was valued within her family and the expectation was that she would attend college after high school graduation. Amber was not interested in attending college, but her parents “made her go [to college].” She described being in a stage in which “I knew I had to go to school, but I kind of didn’t want to go.” As Amber talked, it was evident that her education was not a priority at that time. Her lack of effort and dedication to her education were reflected in her attendance during her prior first semester in college. Amber acknowledged that attendance was an issue during her previous collegiate experience. Throughout our conversation, there were discrepancies regarding her attendance. In Amber’s words, “They [her parents] actually both wanted to kill me when I didn’t go to school for the first time [her first semester in college].” However, as I inquired more specifically about her attendance (or lack thereof), Amber retracted her previous statement, describing that she “would go to class for the most part.” She later stated that she might have attended two of the five classes per week, if at all. A typical day during her previous first semester started in the morning as she woke up to catch the bus in order to arrive at the institution between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Amber possibly would have attended one class and then proceeded to lunch. Thereafter, she might have attended another class and then went to her on-campus job. Later in our
conversation, Amber stated that she was working 20 hours per week, and she “would come here [to campus], not go to class, and go to work. Like, I never missed work, which is funny to think about. I had to come here [to campus] for work, but I wouldn’t come her for school.” Once again, her education was not a priority. Her effort and dedication were focused toward her work responsibilities rather than her education.

One of the courses Amber acknowledged that she attended occasionally was a sociology course. She told me about a friend from high school who encouraged her to attend the course with her. Amber stated that her friend from high school assured her that if Amber attended the course with her, “I’ll [the friend from high school] make sure you [Amber] do your work and help you.” Amber reported she attended this sociology course more than any other course during her previous first semester. This situation was an example of Amber’s lack of accountability in relation to her attendance and coursework.

In addition to applying for academic reinstatement in order to return to college on her own terms and on her own timeline, Amber felt that this was her final opportunity to attend college and earn a degree. When asked what her future aspirations might be, Amber was very unclear. She was interested in the medical field and considering a major in either biology or nursing. Amber was also motivated to apply for academic reinstatement because her best friend was planning to attend the same institution and they would be able to room together on-campus. Amber was very direct when referring to the opportunity associated with her academic reinstatement. This was her “chance” to pursue her education and “nobody else can decide what’s going to happen past this point, but me.”
Second interview. My second meeting with Amber occurred on November 11, 2009. I waited patiently at the front desk of the Student Advising Center, gazing out the large windows of the building. I was eagerly awaiting Amber’s arrival. I was anxious to learn how Amber was performing in her courses and to hear about her experience as an academically reinstated student this semester. I continued to frequently look at the clock on the computer as the minutes passed, nervous that Amber might not attend our meeting.

Amber was now late for our second interview. Once 15 minutes had passed, I called her on her cell phone. Amber answered her cell phone immediately. It became evident that Amber had completely forgotten our scheduled meeting. She reassured me that she could arrive at the Student Advising Center within 15 minutes. Although she was currently off-campus, Amber stated that she was very close to the Student Advising Center. As we concluded our conversation, I became concerned of whether her oversight of our scheduled meeting was comparable to her approach to her academics throughout this semester. I now stood next to the entrance door of the building, grasping the handle tightly, anticipating Amber’s arrival.

Approximately 20 minutes later, Amber walked slowly along the sidewalk approaching the entrance of the Student Advising Center. Her ponytail moved side-to-side in the same rhythm as her stride. Pieces of her hair fell around her head outside of the ponytail as though her hair was not brushed since she awoke this morning. She was wearing a plain wrinkled grey t-shirt and black athletic shorts with a red stripe along each side of the shorts. Her white gym shoes were worn and tattered. Her shoestrings were purposefully untied for ease of inserting and removing her foot into each
shoe. I greeted Amber at the entrance door, holding the door open for her as she entered the building. She was quick to tell me how she had completely forgotten about this meeting, stating that she worked late the night before and she did not do well with early mornings.

We walked slowly to the private meeting room. Amber sat in her chair and began to swivel back and forth in the chair. This same motion continued throughout the majority of our interview. Our first topic of conversation was her attendance during this semester. She was in week 11 of the 15-week semester. Amber admitted that she was “just not trying to fall back into my old routine of things.” She admitted one of the habits that she was still working to break was not attending class. Amber stated:

I’ve missed a couple of classes due to the fact that I got really sick during the beginning of the semester, just with a cold, and it certainly hasn’t gone away all semester. So, I’ve missed a few days due to that just because I just physically couldn’t get out of bed.

Amber admitted she recently missed an entire week of classes because she was sick. The lack of accountability described during Amber’s first interview was echoed in her second interview. She once again demonstrated a lack of accountability on her part in relation to her class attendance. She attributed some of the classes missed to her illness, which she described as “just a cold.”

As I encouraged her to elaborate about the obstacles with her class attendance this semester, she described her issues with transportation. Although she had a room in the
residence halls on campus with her best friend, they frequently spent their time off campus. Amber described her living situation, stating:

If one’s [either her or her roommate] off campus, the other is. So, we actually don’t really spend that much time on campus, but it’s nice to be able to have some place to go that’s not your parent’s house when you’re not on campus. So . . . so, it’s been good.

Without her own vehicle, she depended on others to take her to school when she stayed off campus. A friend who lives on the way to the institution was her means of transportation. However, as Amber described:

She’ll call me, like, five minutes before she’s [her friend] supposed to be there and be, like, “Yeah, by the way, I don’t think I’m gonna be able to make it today.”

And I’m, like, “Oh, cool, thanks. I guess I’m not going to class either.”

Later in the conversation, Amber stated, “My two best friends obviously slap the shit out of me if I don’t come to school, but, a lot of times, they’re the reason I don’t go to school.” As demonstrated in these previous statements, Amber passed blame on her friends rather than assuming responsibility to attend her classes.

I proceeded to ask Amber about her midterm grades, which were released during week 7 of the semester. Amber did not check her midterm grades on-line at that point. We discussed at length her current performance in her fall 2009 courses. As she elaborated on her performance in each course, it was evident that Amber did not hold herself accountable for her performance in her courses. For example, when asked about her performance in her sociology course, she quickly commented, “Yeah, I don’t go to
sociology. I hate the teacher.” She then tried to retract the statement, explaining that she had not completely stopped attending the sociology course.

Amber had not talked with her sociology instructor about her performance at that point, acknowledging that “usually, after class, I have to get up and run because I have to go to work. And, I’m never on a lot of professors’ office hours because when I’m not in class, I’m at work.” A comparable response was given when posed with the subject of tutoring for the sociology class. Amber claimed that all of the tutoring sessions were held when she was either at work or attending another class.

Amber discussed her performance in the science class. She stated that she had attended the class regularly this semester. She said three other co-workers were in the same class. Therefore, “we’ll study together and stuff because we can just take our stuff to work, and regardless of what anybody says, we don’t care. We still just do it [study together at work].”

The obstacle that she encountered in her history course this term was the multiple absences from the Saturday morning class due to the observation of Jewish holidays. In Amber’s words, “I missed a lot of them [history classes] at the beginning of the year because of Jewish holidays. There’s nothing I could do about it. My mom made me go to the services.” With the observation of the Jewish holidays in addition to her being sick, she missed many of her history classes, including the last 4 weeks alone. Her instructor allowed her to take a missed test late, but Amber still verbalized her apprehension that she would pass this class.
Finally, regarding her English class, although she stated that she attended the class regularly, she acknowledged that she was behind on many of her assignments. She worked with the instructor to extend deadlines, but stated that she felt overwhelmed by the amount of assignments left to complete. As described in the previous paragraphs reviewing Amber’s performance in her individual classes, her lack of accountability continued to influence her approach to her academics in addition to her performance in her classes.

I transitioned the conversation from Amber’s performance in her current courses to her experience in the LEAP academic intervention program. Although she previously commented in her journal reflection at the conclusion of the half-day group session that “everything is going to help me in one way or another,” her perspective now was that the information included in the half-day group session was “boring” and “things that I already really knew about, so it was just kinda pointless in my mind.” When I asked Amber to expand on this statement, she commented that she was already aware of the various resources, such as the Academic Success Center, Writing Center, and library, available to her on campus. Amber explained, “And, it just seemed, like, I already know this. So, it just made it [the half-day group session] boring.”

When asked if there was any aspect of the half-day group session that she found helpful from the perspective of an academically reinstated student, Amber responded that she liked feeling that “you’re not the only person that screwed up.” However, she quickly added that she did not like the group discussion aspect of the mandatory half-day group session. She stated her dislike of the group discussions was because “I’m not very, I
wanna say, group oriented when it comes to things. I like doing things my own way and on my own.”

Her focus on prioritizing education was present during my first interview with Amber and resurfaced during our second interview. Work continued to be the main priority for Amber. She attributed her inability to meet with her faculty members regarding her performance in her classes and to participate in tutoring services to her work schedule. Amber worked 15–20 hours per week at the beginning of the semester. However, her hours increased to 27 hours per week due to numerous fellow employees leaving their positions for various reasons. “So, guess who gets thrown all the extra hours because all the kids underneath me don’t know what they’re doing?” Amber had a smirk as she made this comment, seeming to take pride in undertaking the workload in her department when faced with the vacancy of positions.

Amber admitted working fewer hours per week would allow her the opportunity to study more and focus on school. She was honest that she did not study as much as she should this semester. Amber acknowledged she studied “probably 10–15 [hours per week], which is almost identical to my [school] schedule.” When asked to describe her study habits, she explained:

There’s nights where I’ll study for 4 hours at work, but you gotta give or take. It’s not 4 hours straight [of study time]. I work in customer service, so when people aren’t there, usually at night, you’ll get, like, an hour and a half. And, out of that 4 hours, you’re just switching back and forth, writing things down. And, when I’m
at home, I usually study in front of the TV. I can’t do anything when it’s quiet, except sleep.

Amber explained that going to class is her top priority because:

If I go to class, even if I don’t have necessarily the time to study, when it comes down to a test, as long as I’m in class and I’m hearing what’s being said, I have a better chance of getting a better grade on the test rather than saying “Oh well, forget class.”

Although Amber stated that her top priority was attending class, she concluded our discussion regarding her priorities stating, “School’s obviously important. Doing homework’s important. But, at the same time, going to work is important.” She would consider cutting back hours, but “has bills to pay,” insinuating that work had to remain a priority.

I asked Amber about her goals this semester. She stated that a 2.0 semester GPA was her goal. A 2.0 semester GPA would allow her to remain in school at Moreland University. However, she subsequently provided a lengthy denouncement of the minimum 2.0 semester GPA criteria for academically reinstated students. She passionately proclaimed:

Personally, in my mind, when it comes to getting a 2.0 [semester GPA], having to keep a 2.0 [semester GPA] for reinstatement, personally, I think that it’s something that should be more individualized. I’ve actually tried really hard to bust my ass to get a 1.5 [midterm GPA in fall 2009] just because I’m trying to get
back into school after 2 years. And, personally, I think that from when I was here
the first time to now, there’s a huge difference in me actually going to school.

Amber’s perspective was that her ability to continue in classes after the fall 2009 semester
should be based on the increase in her GPA rather than achieving a 2.0 semester GPA.
She attributed her 1.5 midterm GPA in fall 2009 to the fact that she was still attending her
classes compared to the fall 2007 semester when “by the end of week 4, I wasn’t going [to
class],” and she was later academically dismissed.

As we were nearing the conclusion of our second interview, I asked Amber to
describe her plans if she was ultimately dismissed at the end of the fall 2009 semester. It
was clear to me from her blank stare that she had not given any consideration to the
thought of not returning the following term. This was the first time during our second
interview Amber did not immediately respond to one of my questions. Rather, Amber sat
for a couple of seconds, her hands gripping each side of the chair, deep in thought. She
slowly responded:

Nothing, my parents are really strict on letting me go out of state for school or go
anywhere else. They do not want me to leave because they don’t think it will do
me any good. So, wherever that puts in store, I don’t know.

*Academic status.* Amber completed the fall 2009 semester. She earned a 0.50
term GPA. Her cumulative GPA was a 0.19. An overview of her grades is provided in
Table 4. Amber was academically dismissed at the end of the fall 2009 semester.
Table 4

*Final Grades of the Fall 2009 Semester (Amber)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Summary #2: Courtney.** Courtney, a Caucasian female who grew up in a northeast, mid-western town, was 21 years old at the time of this study. She attended Moreland University for two terms, fall 2006 and spring 2007, and was a pre-finance major in the College of Business Administration. Courtney was academically dismissed at the end of the spring 2007 semester due to her poor academic performance. Her cumulative GPA at the time of her academic dismissal was a 0.35. She initially requested and was granted reinstatement for the spring 2009 semester. However, she later requested and was approved to delay her reinstatement to the fall 2009 semester “due to financial reasons.”

**Reinstatement letter.** In her reinstatement letter dated October 30, 2008, Courtney described the factors that contributed to her poor academic performance during her previous attendance at Moreland University. Courtney mentioned her poor study habits, which she noticed “were dissimilar to many of her fellow classmates.” She had a tremendous amount of free time because she was enrolled in 13 credit hours of
coursework during the fall 2006 semester and 14 credit hours of coursework in the spring 2007 semester. During these terms, she was not working nor was she participating in any extracurricular activities. Rather than allotting this free time toward her academics, “I chose other various activities that greatly hindered my [academic] performance.” Courtney did not utilize any support service resources nor did she meet with any of her instructors or academic advising staff members to address her academic obstacles.

Courtney cited her lack of maturity as a hindrance to her prior academic performance as well, explaining, “I don’t believe that I was mature enough to handle the responsibilities that were placed before me. I needed to mature and grow in a way that helped me become more stable and more confident in myself.” Her acknowledged dependence on her family financially and emotionally was a barrier for Courtney. She moved away from home for the first time, which impacted her transition to college. With her parents supporting her “financially 100% of the way,” Courtney felt that this led her to be unmotivated and irresponsible.

Courtney was previously a pre-finance major in the College of Business Administration. She admitted that her uncertainty of a major and her dislike of the corresponding business curriculum led to her lack of interest in her courses and, consequently, to her class absences and poor academic performance in her courses. She admitted that she did not explore other majors as she “neglected the importance of this situation [the uncertainty and dislike of her pre-finance major].”

Courtney attributed her decision to return to seek reinstatement after being academically dismissed to a variety of factors. She desired to pursue her college
education and wanted “to prove to myself” that she could be successful in accomplishing this goal. Courtney made numerous personal changes in her life she felt would better prepare her to return to school. She attributed her preparedness to her increased maturity and independence. During her absence from attending school, Courtney worked to become financially independent from her parents. Her personal growth also had a positive effect on her confidence level. Courtney decided to apply for academic reinstatement as an exploratory major “so that I may explore and speak with professionals who can help me determine a proper career choice.”

**First interview.** My first meeting with Courtney was held on August 25, 2009. As I approached Courtney to greet her and led her to the small meeting room, I immediately noticed Courtney’s radiant smile, one that is truly an example of a smile that would light up a room. While I guided Courtney back to the meeting room, I quickly learned that Courtney’s smile was reflective of her bubbly personality. As we walked together making small talk about parking on campus and the warm temperatures outside, she was quite conversational, responding to my statements and adding her own perspective to our conversation.

Courtney sat at the end of the table within the small meeting room. I sat to her right on the side of the table. As she sat down, I noticed how well put together Courtney was. Her dark brown hair appeared nearly black at times. It was well groomed and held back from her face with a tiger print head band. Her large diamond studded earrings sparkled from the sunlight that peered through the single large window of the meeting room. She wore a ruffled V-neck white blouse with a large brown belt around her waist
and knee-length blue jean shorts. I noticed she was considerably shorter than I first thought due to the 3-inch brown wedge heels that she was wearing.

Courtney was raised in a city located in a northeast, mid-western town. She immediately talked about her family even without posing a question about her family life. It was evident from the onset of our conversation that her family was an integral part of her life. She talked openly about her parents, both of whom had encouraged her to attend Moreland University, which was located approximately one hour away from her hometown. Her parents told her that by going away to college, she would “find herself there. And you’ll appreciate it [the college experience] a lot more if you go now.” Her two older sisters attended a large, public, four-year institution and a small, private, liberal arts, four-year institution, respectively, both of which were located in the northeast portion of the United States. Although she could have easily followed in the footsteps of one of her older sisters by attending an institution closer to her hometown, she stated, “I didn’t really feel at home at either of those places.” Her hot pink manicured fingernails flitted through the air as she actively gestured with her hands as she spoke, almost as though her hand movements were a means to release some of the energy that she had within her.

She reflected on her prior poor academic performance. She was very direct in stating, “A lot of it [her poor academic performance] was I didn’t want to be here [at Moreland University].” She explained that her former boyfriend was still in high school in her hometown. None of her friends from high school attended the same college that she did. She felt as though she was alone and had no friends, while her fellow classmates
were attending institutions with their best friends. She had to learn how to make friends, which she described as “weird” and “really hard.” Courtney’s lack of desire to further her education at Moreland University resulted in the fact that she “didn’t really do what I was supposed to do and didn’t really dive into it [college] like they [her parents] wanted me to. So, the whole freshman experience was not what I did at all.” Although she never drank in high school, Courtney acknowledged that she began to drink and to party in college. “It was kind of like my parents just let the reins loose and I did go crazy. And that was the problem.”

During her previous attendance in college, she said, “I was good at sleeping. I mean, that’s pretty much it.” She admittedly had poor time management skills and she stopped attending her classes by the middle of October during her first semester (fall 2006). She described a typical day during the fall 2006 and spring 2007 semesters as getting out of bed between 2:00–3:00 p.m. She was not employed. She then spent the latter portion of the afternoon and early evening going outside, watching TV, and hanging out “with the rest of the people who didn’t go to class.” She hung out in residence halls on campus primarily, staying up until 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. As she reflected on her prior college experience, she giggled and her cheeks turned a light shade of pink, which depicted her embarrassment regarding her previous approach to her education. She stated, “Oh my god, wow, I was so lame.”

Courtney described her academic dismissal as “embarrassing” and “really scary.” She was concerned about what other people would think of her upon hearing that she was academically dismissed from college. “I really wasn’t thinking of myself. I was worried
about how my parents would react, how my friends would react, and it was just very embarrassing.” She knew that it was inevitable, “but, I was trying to convince myself that [Moreland University] would give me another chance.” Her parents were both disappointed. However, her father, in particular, was angry as well. Courtney acknowledged, “my dad and I did not talk for 2 months after that [her academic dismissal from college].” Her friends were attempting to be supportive of her during this time, but she stated that they were critical of her as well because “they know that’s [being academically dismissed from college] not me.”

Courtney did file an immediate appeal of the academic dismissal, which was denied. She was not optimistic that her appeal would be approved and she “was actually relieved when it was denied because I really wasn’t ready [for college] still.” After she received notification of the decline of her appeal, Courtney decided to remain in close proximity to Moreland University because she decided to live with her boyfriend. She got a job, first at a coffee shop and later at an insurance company, where she is still employed full-time as a receptionist and server in the inn located within the insurance company. Not attending school for two years provided Courtney the opportunity to become financially stable and, therefore, not monetarily dependent on her parents. It also allowed her “to change her outlook on life.” She felt that she needed to figure out what she wanted to do with her life and how a college education fit into her life goals.

Courtney’s desire to apply for academic reinstatement was attributed to a variety of factors. She longed to earn a college degree. Courtney decided to return to the same institution where she previously performed poorly because of her familiarity and comfort
level with the institution, which was influenced by the people [at Moreland University] ("extremely nice") and by the atmosphere ("just the campus. I love it!").

Courtney referred to her decision to apply for academic reinstatement as a "second chance." However, Courtney acknowledged her fear of failure after her return to school. She felt that she was in a much better position in her life to be academically successful due to the growth that she experienced in her priorities and time management skills. Her family supported Courtney’s return to school although they did perceive Moreland University as a "party school." She also received support and motivation from her boyfriend.

Courtney intended to work approximately 30 hours per week after her academic reinstatement this semester. She was optimistic she could exhibit the traits she affiliated with being a good student. Some of the traits she mentioned included good time management skills and extra effort.

Courtney desired to take a different approach to her college experience this time around. She wanted to know her professors personally, asking them for clarification and help when needed. She wanted to get involved in clubs or activities on campus so that she can “put herself out there” in a positive manner to meet new people who were motivated and wanted to succeed academically. She was optimistic that all of the life changes she made and her different approach to her academics she intended to implement would result in “all A’s” this semester.

Second interview. My second meeting with Courtney occurred on November 11, 2009. Courtney was sitting patiently in the lobby area of the Student Advising Center
when I arrived to greet her for our second meeting. She was dressed in a long-sleeved rounded neck black shirt with a pink tank top underneath. She wore jeans and solid black shoes. Her hair was pulled neatly into a ponytail at the bottom of the back of her head. Her bangs were pulled to the right side of her forehead. Although she was smiling and pleasant, her demeanor was noticeably less vivacious compared to our first meeting.

Courtney selected to sit in the same chair that she previously sat in less than 3 months earlier during our first interview. We began our conversation by discussing her academic performance this term. Her posted midterm grades reflected a 2.5 GPA. She was quite concerned about her performance in her 7.5-week mathematics course. She stated that she hated the course and described the course as “very hard.” Her nutrition instructor did not post a midterm grade for the course, but she felt as though she was earning a ‘B’ in the course. At midterm, she was earning a grade of ‘B’ in both history and English and a grade of ‘C’ in her psychology course.

Courtney stated she had attended one advising session at that point in the semester. She discussed her performance in her current fall courses and registration for the following spring semester with her academic advisor. She had not attended any other scheduled advising sessions. However, her academic advisor was enrolled in her nutrition course, so she talked with her academic advisor regularly within the class.

As Courtney reflected on attending the mandatory half-day group session, she attributed the LEAP program as giving her “an extra boost.” She was encouraged by the realization that she was not the only reinstated student. She also enjoyed hearing the stories of the other reinstated students and their plans for improvement after academic
reinstatement. Courtney felt the discussion about time management was the most valuable strategy for her.

She stated she felt that she “set her goals way too high. And, I’m quite not there.” She admitted she had encountered some obstacles for which she was not completely prepared. Courtney acknowledged:

I think I came in with an overly positive attitude because I thought, “Oh, I’m gonna get all A’s. This is gonna be easy. I can do this.” But, it actually ended up being a lot harder that I originally thought. I thought I’d be able to do work and school at the same time, but it is pretty hard.

As she talked, I could tell Courtney was disappointed in her academic performance. The positive and fearless student I met less than 3 months earlier was now humbled by her experiences this semester.

Courtney was working 20–35 hours per week this semester. She cited school as her top priority with work followed closely behind. She admitted her attempt to balance work, school, and her other responsibilities limited her ability to actively seek out some of the other resources and services discussed during the half-day group session. Courtney stated:

I think that I’ve participated not as much as I should, but I did make an effort to do it. I guess my whole thing was I would kind of use it [the resources, services and strategies promoted through the LEAP program] if I really need to, which is not the best approach to it [school]. But, like, I’m trying to work a job and pay bills
and do school full-time. So, it was kind of hard to distribute my time between all of that. I tried.

She had not joined any student organizations at that point either. She realized the growth she experienced academically and personally during this semester. Her priorities were now more aligned with her goals. She applauded herself for the drastic change in her approach to her academics, stating, “It’s such a big difference from the first time when I was here [at college]. Huge difference!”

She realized throughout this semester that she did not feel that she knew “how to study effectively.” As Courtney expanded on what she meant by this phrase, “how to study effectively,” I realized she was truly describing the difficulty she experienced in balancing all of her responsibilities within and outside of the classroom. She described her difficulty in determining “how to do everything all at once, all of my classes, how to read for this [one] class and how to write a paper for this [other] class.”

Courtney stated she experienced difficulty in her mathematics course this term. She attributed the difficulty in part to the fact that it had been two and one half years since she took a mathematics course. Although her instructor was receptive to providing assistance to her when she initially approached him about her difficulties with mathematics, she felt she needed more help than he could provide because “he has a different way of explaining things.” Courtney also stated that she was working with her psychology instructor to determine more effective techniques to study for her psychology class. Courtney was hopeful her consultation with her psychology instructor about her study habits would assist in her approach to studying in her other classes as well.
Overall, Courtney felt that she would have been successful after academic reinstatement regardless of whether or not she would have participated in the LEAP intervention program. She explained her confidence in her ability to be successful was “because I really wanted to come back and do it [pass my classes].” Although she previously stated that the panel discussion was not beneficial, she later conceded:

If I wouldn’t have known about all the resources and everything, I don’t think it would have been easy for me. It’s kind of easy right now because of everything that I know. But, I don’t think without it [the LEAP intervention program] I would have been where I am with my midterm grades and stuff.

She praised the LEAP program, stating, “I’m thankful for the LEAP program. I really am.” Courtney mentioned an aspect that she might have found helpful would have been periodic follow-up group sessions with her fellow reinstated students throughout the semester to talk “about their progress, how they’re doing.” Courtney valued “hearing what other people have to say who are in my position. It helps me a lot because I’m not the only one.”

**Academic status.** Courtney completed the fall 2009 semester. She earned a 2.58 term GPA. Her cumulative GPA was a 1.38. An overview of her grades is provided in Table 5. Courtney was able to continue into the spring 2010 semester because she earned over a 2.0 semester GPA. She was still on academic probation due to the fact that her cumulative GPA remained below a 2.0.
Table 5

*Final Grades of the Fall 2009 Semester (Courtney)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Summary #3: Scott.** Scott, a Caucasian male who lived in a northeast, mid-western town, was 26 years old at the time of this study. He attended the university for two terms, fall 2001 and spring 2002. At that time, he was an exploratory major in the College of Undergraduate Studies. He was subsequently academically dismissed due to his poor academic performance. His cumulative GPA at the time of his academic dismissal was a 0.27.

**Reinstatement letter.** In his reinstatement letter dated February 22, 2009, Scott provided an overview of his experience during the two semesters he attended college. He described his prior academic experience as being “blinded by all the social aspects of college, the parties, sports, and many other things on a nineteen year olds [sic] mind.” His first semester was plagued by a lack of studying and placing minimal effort toward his classes. Scott’s time was spent playing on a club athletics team at Moreland University and partying with his friends. During his first semester in fall 2001, he performed poorly.
earning a 0.50 semester GPA. During his second semester in spring 2002, he moved into a residence hall on campus. He described this decision as “an even poorer decision.” He was very frank about the fact that he did not attend class nor did he study during his second semester.

After his academic dismissal at the end of the spring 2002 semester, Scott moved to the southern portion of the United States to live with his mother and stepfather, but, “due to family problems,” Scott decided to return to his northeast, mid-western hometown to live with his grandparents. While employed with a logistics services company, he made the decision to follow in his grandfather’s footsteps and he joined the United States Navy in 2003. During his service in the Navy, Scott was accepted into the Naval Hospital Corps School. After 14 weeks of medical training, Scott was given orders to report to the Field Medical Service School at the Marine Corps Base in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. “This is where I discovered my love of the medical field,” Scott stated. His role at the base was to care for post-partum patients and their newborn children. Much of Scott’s time was spent alongside pediatricians, providing assistance with newborns needing medical attention in order to survive.

Another pivotal experience he highlighted in his reinstatement letter was his time spent in a small clinic on an airbase located on the border of Iraq and Kuwait. He worked alongside doctors and physician’s assistants treating patients with a wide range of illnesses and ailments. Scott remained in this role until he was honorably discharged from active service in June 2008.
Upon his honorable discharge from the United States Navy, Scott worked as a cable contractor with his stepfather in the southern portion of the United States. Scott and his wife, whom he had married in July 2006, then returned to his northeast, mid-western hometown to care for his aging grandparents. At the same time, he had the desire to return to college. In his words, “I enjoy working in the medical field and would like to continue my education in nursing with the hopes of working in healthcare at major hospitals such as the Cleveland Clinic or Duke Medical Center.” Due to the financial support provided by the G.I. Bill, Scott did not plan to work while attending school. His intentions were to attend class, work with tutors, and study daily. His ultimate goal was to help others after he earned his degree in nursing.

*First interview.* My first interview with Scott was conducted on August 25, 2009. As I approached the front desk area, I could hear the front door of the Student Advising Center open and I anxiously anticipated meeting Scott. As I had expected based on his detailed description of his military background in his reinstatement letter, Scott arrived early for our interview. I greeted Scott with a handshake. His grip was firm. I noticed his constant eye contact as we conversed on our walk to the interview room. He sat at the head of the table in the interview room. Scott moved his chair toward the table in an effort to rest his elbows comfortably on the table, his arms extended outward, and his hands placed in the formation of a triangle. Although his demeanor was pleasant, his facial expressions were serious. The gaze from his hazel eyes was intense.

Scott wore a short-sleeved blue and orange checkered Chaps shirt with jeans. The bottom portion of an unidentifiable tattoo on his left upper arm was periodically visible
during our conversation as Scott slightly moved his hands as he talked. His solid white gym shoes were planted firmly on the ground. His silver bracelet on his right arm hit the table periodically. On his left arm, a yellow ‘Livestrong’ bracelet fell over his silver watch. At times, his gold wedding band caught my attention as the sunlight peering through the window hit the ring at just the right position.

When asked to describe himself, Scott stated that he had been married for three years. He was a member of the military for approximately five and a half years after he was academically dismissed from college. His primary reason for joining the military was in order to fund his college education in the future. He worked two different jobs since being honorably discharged from the military, neither of which he particularly liked. The first position was working for his mother and stepfather’s company as a cable lineman in the southern portion of the United States. The other position was a sales associate at a home improvement retail store, where he is currently employed.

In describing his prior academic experience in college, Scott stated that he would usually get out of bed between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. He would go to bed between 12:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m., “if I went to bed at all.” He did not attend class regularly during his first semester (fall 2001). Scott only went to class on days in which tests were given during his second semester (spring 2002) until spring break. After spring break, he never attended his classes again. Reflecting on his prior academic experience, Scott stated:

I didn’t do anything well academically. I did not try to do anything well academically. I guess if beer drinking counts, I probably did that way better than I
did anything else, but I didn’t do anything well. It’s just because I didn’t wanna. I didn’t wanna be here.

Scott acknowledged he was “lazy” during his previous attendance in college. His schedule consisted of eating, sleeping, and playing video games. “I couldn’t balance the social aspect of being a college student with what you have to do to stay in college.”

Scott admitted that he didn’t have a lot of experience as a student from his previous attendance in college. He explained:

So, I can’t say I have a lot of experience being a student here [at Moreland University], but I like to say I have been a student ever since I left here [college]. Especially in what I have been doing since then in the military because I’ve always been training. So, I mean, I don’t really have a good experience because I didn’t make one for myself.

A variety of factors led to his decision to apply for academic reinstatement. After his experience as a medic in the United States Navy, Scott decided he wanted to become a medic after he was honorably discharged from the United States Navy. His goals transitioned to becoming a doctor or nurse. In order to serve in a capacity of a doctor or a nurse, Scott had to earn his college degree.

Scott’s wife contributed to his decision to return to college. She was not only a source of motivation, but a role model as a graduate of Moreland University. In conversation with his wife, who was contemplating pursuit of a graduate degree, Scott verbalized his dissatisfaction with his previous job as cable contractor. He told her “how I’m not really gonna be happy unless I’m doing what I was doing before [as a medic in
the military].” They discussed how Scott could become a medic. However, from his perspective, he questioned why he should just stop at being a medic. The idea of nursing or medical school quickly entered the conversation. Within days of this conversation with his wife, Scott composed his reinstatement letter in an effort to return to college. At that time, Scott identified nursing, specifically neonatal intensive care, as his intended major “because that is what I wanted to do at that point.” However, as he continued to consider his interest in the medical field, “I just feel that my mind’s kinda setup more for seeing patients, instead of just doing the basics, [such as] getting their vital signs in the morning, that a nurse would do.” With a grin, Scott mentioned that he had even picked up an MCAT book because he considered attending medical school in the future. He viewed his newfound goal of becoming a doctor as his way of striving “to go a step above.”

Another factor that contributed to Scott’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement was the lingering feeling of failure. He wanted to prove to himself, his wife, and family that he could succeed academically. Along with this desire to overcome his prior academic failure, Scott described how his mother was academically dismissed from Moreland University. Scott did not have a close relationship with his mother and I sensed some resentment in his tone as he spoke about his mother. Scott was adamant that he would not fail again.

Scott’s mother and his biological father were married when they were 19 years old. They had Scott a few years later. His mother worked full-time, attended college, and raised Scott. She was unable to balance work, school, and family life, which resulted in her academic dismissal from college. Scott’s father was “an abusive parent.” His mother
eventually divorced his father and later remarried his stepfather. Scott described his mother and stepfather as “not really experienced parents.” I asked what he meant by the phrase ‘experienced parents.’ Scott said that his mother and stepfather “really weren’t in the picture.” They weren’t present in his life. His mother and stepfather started a business of hanging cable lines. They moved south when Scott was in fifth or sixth grade. Scott explained:

So, I was at an age where it wasn’t really right to take me away from the life I had here. So, I stayed with my grandparents. So, they [his mother and stepfather] were gone for probably the most important years of my life, when I was trying to figure things out.

Although Scott’s mother and stepfather were not present during his childhood, they played a significant role in his decision to apply for reinstatement and to return to college. Scott acknowledged that he did not want to experience comparable life failures and financial obstacles like his mother and stepfather. As Scott talked about his mother, specifically, it felt as though he was attempting to convince me that he would not encounter the same obstacles in the future. His voice was firm. His hands were in constant motion with swift hand gestures in front of him as he talked, providing insight into his perspective on his parents (his mother and stepfather) and the obstacles they encountered throughout their life.

His maternal grandparents provided a stable environment to raise Scott in light of his mother and stepfather not being “ready to be parents.” Scott felt that his grandparents were not strict with him and he took advantage of their leniency. He reminisced about his
memories of his grandmother helping him with his spelling and she made sure that he completed his homework. However, there was never pressure to strive for ‘A’s.’ Earning ‘C’ grades was considered acceptable. His grandparents’ satisfaction with mediocre grades conveyed the following message to Scott, “If you can be great, good. But, all we [his grandparents] want is for you to be average.”

Scott stated the fact that his grandparents did not give him the choice of where he would attend college contributed his previous poor academic performance. Scott reflected, “Before it was kinda weird because I grew up with my grandparents, so they basically told me, ‘You’re gonna go to [Moreland University].’” He felt he would have had the opportunity to be more successful if he had gone away to school because “I would have gotten away from everything I knew.” Now, it is his choice to return to college and earning a college degree is something he is striving to obtain. He felt that his increased level of maturity, his enhanced sense of responsibility, and his immense desire to earn a college degree were glaring differences from the person he used to be during his first attendance in college. His lifestyle changed since he attended college previously. He was older, married, and his social life now consisted of staying home rather than drinking and partying regularly.

Today, Scott’s grandparents were elderly and his grandmother’s health, specifically, “is slowly declining.” Although his grandparents still lived alone in their own home, Scott and his wife played a much more active role in helping with their day-to-day activities, such as laundry, household, chores, and errands. Due to his decision to return to college, his wife was going to assume more of the responsibilities. Due to the
support his grandparents gave to him growing up in the absence of his parents, Scott verbalized his obligation to help his grandparents now. “They [his grandparents] took care of me when my parents couldn’t, so I’m just kinda repaying that debt, I guess.”

Scott’s mother-in-law and father-in-law were also influential in his decision to apply for reinstatement. They were both educators and value education. Scott attributed the “comfortable life” of his in-laws to their hard work and dedication to their careers and family. They provided both Scott and his wife continuous support during their time together. They gave monetary support to aide with closing costs for the purchase of their home and helped in furnishing their home. All that they asked of Scott in return was to attend school and earn his college degree.

Scott’s demeanor changed as he talked about his in-laws. It was as though he found it much easier to talk about his in-laws than any other topic we discussed at that point in our conversation. The pace of his conversation was a little quicker, as though it was marked with a sense of excitement or happiness. The change in the pace of Scott’s conversation was exemplified when asked about the lifestyle of his father-in-law and mother-in-law, which he had previously cited as a lifestyle he aspired to achieve. Scott stated quickly and without pausing for a thought or a breath:

They live a very comfortable life. I mean, they have careers. They’re devoted to their careers and each other. They’re devoted to their family. The biggest thing is they do a lot for my wife and I to make sure we got started off right, which, I don’t like taking anything from anybody. I don’t like accepting money or gifts, but with them, I realize that they do it because they can and because they wanna do it.
That’s how I want to be when I have children that are my age someday. I wanna be able to help them in the same way that my mother- and father-in-law helped me and my wife. Not because I have to do it, but because I want to and I can do it. I know my parents aren’t able to do that for me because they don’t have careers. They’ve lived their life a different way. I wanna be able to be there in a way.

In regard to academic resources, Scott planned to utilize the Writing Center “because I didn’t realize you had to put punctuation in writing until I was a senior in high school.” He elaborated as he stated, “I knew I had to do it, but I didn’t know what went where, and it’s just because I didn’t pay attention.” He also planned to seek out the assistance of a mathematics tutor. Scott admitted that mathematics was difficult for him, specifically due to the length of time since he completed a mathematics course.

Scott mentioned during our conversation that he was previously diagnosed with dyslexia, although he was uncertain of where his formal paperwork confirming the diagnosis of dyslexia was located. He was not seeking out the assistance of the Student Accessibility Services department because “I don’t know what happened to them (his formal paperwork). So, I pretty much figured out a way I can learn and get around the whole problem.”

Scott was eager to return to the classroom. His goals for the fall 2009 semester were “to get off of academic probation” and to earn A’s and B’s in his courses, just as his “mother- and father-in-law beat that one on my head for the past 6 years.” ‘C’ grades were no longer the acceptable standard for Scott as had been the case when he was
growing up. Finally, Scott wanted to complete the necessary coursework in order to declare a major outside of the exploratory major.

**Second interview.** My second meeting with Scott was scheduled for November 11, 2009. Scott never arrived at our scheduled meeting even with multiple telephone calls and e-mails. I referred to his journal reflections completed at the conclusion of the LEAP half-day group session. At that time, Scott stated that the LEAP half-day group session made him feel “more comfortable. I wasn’t embarrassed of failing out of school.” He commented that his participation in the LEAP half-day group session was “a step forward towards a successful academic semester.” Although he found all aspects of the LEAP half-day group session beneficial, he specifically highlighted the time management exercises and the information provided about the Academic Success Center, Career Services Center, and academic advising as the most helpful. Finally, he felt that he was now able to “devise a course of action [for the fall 2009 semester] and put it into play.”

**Academic status.** Scott earned a 0.00 term GPA. His cumulative GPA was a 0.21. An overview of his grades is provided in Table 6. It is important to note that ‘SF’ means ‘Stopped Attending F’ and ‘NF’ means ‘Never Attended F’. Both ‘SF’ and ‘NF’ equate to zero quality points. To clarify, Scott’s first mathematics course was 7.5 weeks. He earned a final grade of ‘SF’. He was then enrolled in the same mathematics course for the last 7.5 weeks of the semester. He earned a final grade of ‘NF’. Scott was academically dismissed at the end of the fall 2009 semester because he earned below a 2.0 semester GPA.
Table 6

*Final Grades of the Fall 2009 Semester (Scott)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (retake of above course)</td>
<td>NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Summary #4: Brooke.** Brooke, a Caucasian female who lived in a northeast, mid-western town, was 21 years old at the time of this study. She attended the university for two terms, fall 2006 and spring 2007. She was an exploratory major in the College of Undergraduate Studies at Moreland University. At the end of the spring 2007 semester, she was academically dismissed due to her poor academic performance. Her cumulative GPA at the time of her dismissal was a 1.53.

**Reinstatement letter.** In her reinstatement letter submitted April 2, 2008, Brooke attributed her previous poor academic performance to “the college life” that she was living. She was working four days a week at her family’s restaurant and catering business while attending college previously. However, she felt that her prior academic pitfalls were a direct result of her lifestyle. In Brooke’s words, “I had a lot more freedom and I wasn’t pushing myself like I should have been. I wasn’t taking the time to study.”
Since her academic dismissal, Brooke worked 32–40 hours per week at her family’s restaurant and catering business. She stressed the importance of keeping a set routine while not attending college. She feared that without a routine, she would become lazy and unmotivated. Working 32–40 hours per week also provided her the opportunity to save money for school in an effort not to have to work as much if given the opportunity to return to college. Brooke intended to work 2–3 days per week upon her return to college. Brooke mentioned feeling like an “outcast” since her academic dismissal. She wrote:

All of my friends attend a college and all they would do is talk about school and I felt left out. The reason I want to go back to school isn’t because my friends do, it’s because I don’t want to be working a low paying job struggling to survive paycheck to paycheck each week.

By applying for academic reinstatement and returning to school, Brooke wanted to earn a college education and have a “good job.” Although she was unsure of a specific major, she was interested in the healthcare field and saw herself working in sports or with children in the future.

Upon academic reinstatement, Brooke felt that it was important to make her schoolwork a regular part of her daily routine. She realized that in order to be successful in college, she “couldn’t slack off any more.” Rather, she had to incorporate studying into her daily lifestyle. She planned to “check out tutoring programs that [Moreland University] offers so that I can get any extra help I need.” Brooke also mentioned that she needed to be present in every class and to talk with her instructors.
First interview. My first interview with Brooke was conducted on August 25, 2009. After greeting Brooke at the front desk area of the Student Advising Center, I led her back to the interview room. She sat at the head of the table in the interview room. Brooke wore a loose fitting black, red, and grey floral top over a black tank top. Her silver heart-shaped necklace hung over her floral top. She wore large diamond hoop earrings that were visible through her long brown hair. Brooke nervously fixed her bangs that swooped across her forehead. As I prepared to begin the interview, I noticed the sound of her chewing gum intensified in speed and volume. I looked up to notice a fluorescent green piece of gum as Brooke grinned slightly. Her smile revealed a gap between her two front teeth.

Brooke was very anxious, picking at the remaining blue fingernail polish on her short fingernails. She noticed that flakes of her blue fingernail polish were visible on the wooden table. She quickly moved her hands slightly forward in an effort to hide the chips of blue polish. Brooke continued to twist the ring with a light blue stone residing on her left index finger. This was one of many rings that Brooke wore on multiple fingers of each hand.

When I asked Brooke to introduce herself, she began by describing her employment at her family-owned restaurant and catering business. She stated that she started hanging around the business at the age of 11. She never had to apply for a job. This was her first and only place of employment. She moved out of her parents’ home one year ago. She lived with her cousin in her hometown. Over the past three years, she spent her free-time coaching an eighth grade girls’ basketball team.
Brooke’s parents divorced when she was younger. Her mother and father have since remarried to new partners. She had a positive relationship with her parents, and as well as her stepmother and stepfather. She had a sister who she has not spoken with in over one year as a result of a fight between the two of them. She also had a stepsister and two stepbrothers.

Brooke replied quickly to my questions with abbreviated, short answers. Her blue eyes wandered around the room as we conversed. Brooke discussed her initial intentions to apply for academic reinstatement for the fall 2008 semester. However, during the winter of 2008, she broke her neck in a sled riding accident. The recovery time from the injury prolonged her application for reinstatement and return to college.

Many factors influenced Brooke’s decision to seek academic reinstatement in college. She desired to earn her college degree. She felt that she had much to prove to herself and wanted to overcome her prior academic failure. The possibility of being academically dismissed again was a reality she used to motivate her to be successful in returning to college.

Brooke chose to return to the same institution from which she was previously dismissed primarily because it was close to home. Her cousin, who was also her roommate, was a source of encouragement for her. Brooke was close to her family, who were supportive of her return to college. Brooke reflected on the comparisons her mother would make between her and her sister growing up. Her mother repeatedly asked Brooke, “Why do you always have to slack off and not do what you’re supposed to do all the time?” Brooke described herself as the athletic sister and “my sister was always the smart
one.” Her sister always received high grades. Although the comparisons were made between her and her sister as a means of motivation, Brooke admitted that many of her personal achievements were in sports, not within the classroom.

Since she composed her letter for academic reinstatement, she changed her mind regarding her intended academic path. She mentioned in her academic reinstatement letter that she was interested in the healthcare field. She since decided to pursue the hospitality management program. She felt that this was a perfect fit for her because of her intentions of working in the family restaurant and catering business. Brooke felt that hospitality management would be “easier” for her compared to a major such as business administration because “the credentials aren’t as high for my GPA to stay and I think that business, I mean, it could take you anywhere. But, the hospitality management focuses more on what I’m doing.”

Brooke discussed the obstacles she encountered during her prior collegiate experience that resulted in her poor academic performance and subsequent academic dismissal. First, she stated that she was lazy. Her lack of focus and effort were evident. Her perspective at that time was, “let’s have fun, be stupid, and not focus on school as much as I should have.” She stated that attendance was “not so much” of an issue. However, she admitted that she would choose other activities, such as sleeping or hanging out with friends, over attending class. Brooke acknowledged that studying was not her priority. She lived at home at the time. She did not have to work as much because she did not have to pay for other expenses, such as rent. However, as Brooke explained, “I didn’t have to be as responsible.” Finally, she felt that her uncertainty about her major
“had a lot to do with why I wasn’t as interested [in school previously] because it was, like, I didn’t know what I wanted to do.”

Her academic dismissal was not completely expected due to her uncertainty of her final grades in some of her courses during the last semester she attended. When she received her academic dismissal letter, she cried. Her mother “wasn’t happy with me.” Brooke stated that she felt “stupid because I didn’t apply myself like I should have. And I knew that I could have done better.” She described the letter as a “slap in the face.” Brooke stated that the academic dismissal letter made her want to “come back and get a degree and do something with my life.” Although some of her family members were aware of her previous academic dismissal from college, her friends were still unaware of the true reason she did not return to college. Instead, she told them that she decided to take some “time off” from school.

Brooke’s goal in returning to college this semester was to earn good grades and to increase her GPA. She stated that she would be satisfied with ‘B’ grades and definitely nothing lower than ‘B’ grades.

**Second interview.** My second meeting with Brooke occurred on November 11, 2009. I greeted Brooke in the lobby area of the Student Advising Center when she arrived for our second meeting. As we proceeded to the small meeting room to conduct our interview, she was quiet, only providing short, polite responses to my small talk questions. She was dressed in a fitted long-sleeved V-neck grey sweater with an evergreen colored shirt underneath. She wore blue jeans over her black boots. The sounds of her boots walking across the tiled floor in the hallway en route to our small
meeting room filled the void in our small talk. When we arrived in our small meeting room, Brooke automatically sat at the head of the table where she had sat during her first interview. Her straight hair fell a few inches below her shoulders. Her bangs fell to the right side of her forehead. She wore the same diamond hoop earrings that she wore previously. They sparkled from the ray of the sunlight through the window.

I began our conversation by asking her about her performance in her classes thus far this semester. She was enrolled in two courses this semester, sociology and hospitality management. Brooke immediately mentioned her difficulty in her sociology course. Her posted midterm grade was a ‘D+.’ She appeared optimistic that she could increase her grade in her sociology course by participating in an extra credit research study and by performing well on her upcoming test.

Brooke mentioned in her journal reflection at the conclusion of the mandatory half-day group session that she planned on attending the tutoring services through the Academic Success Center along with meeting with her academic advisor in the Student Advising Center. Brooke commented, “These centers will better me as a student and help me achieve my goals.” However, when asked if she had taken advantage of any tutoring and assistance to help with the difficulties she experienced in her sociology course, she stated, “No, I haven’t. They [the Academic Success Center] had two exam review study sessions that I could got to, but I couldn’t go to them because I had to work, and I just couldn’t [miss work].” Brooke reached out to her instructor “a few times” via e-mail. Brooke reflected, “He said to come see him, but it’s really just to go over my test grade and what I’ve missed, which I could still go do for, like, the final [exam to] see what I’m
confused on.” Brooke spoke with confidence, smiling as she stated that she could still earn a final grade of a ‘C’ or maybe even a ‘B’ in her sociology course.

On the other hand, when asked about her hospitality management course, she beamed as she verbalized her love of the course and her interest in the content being taught. Brooke excitedly stated:

I can relate to it [the content of the hospitality management course] real well. That’s what I want to do. I like the idea of being in the hospitality industry, whether it be food service with me taking over the family restaurant or going anywhere to do it. I would do anything in the hospitality field.

This course reaffirmed her interest in pursuing a major in hospitality management. She anticipated earning a final grade of an ‘A’ in the hospitality management course.

When asked about her attendance in her classes this semester, Brooke first mentioned her attendance in her sociology course, stating that she “missed, like, two [classes] because I didn’t feel good, but, really, I go all the time.” She had never missed a hospitality management course this semester. Brooke’s self-reported attendance this semester was quite comparable to her attendance in her previous two semesters.

Brooke stated she had attended one advising session at that point in the semester. She said she discussed her performance in her current fall courses and registration for the following spring semester. She actually had another academic advising appointment scheduled with her academic advisor this week because she was experiencing difficulty registering for her courses. Brooke wanted to enroll in at least two courses during the spring semester, but she preferred to take three courses.
While reflecting on her experience during the LEAP program, Brooke stated the mandatory half-day group session was a “wake-up call” for her. She commented, “Going to the LEAP program actually helped me a lot to see where I am. Be, like, ‘Hey, I can’t do this again and get in trouble and not be able to go to school again [if academically dismissed again].’” She was grateful to learn about the resources across campus during the LEAP half-day group session.

Brooke reflected on how she felt entering the room where the half-day group session was held. Brooke stated:

It was just awkward, just walking [in] and [to] know that I shouldn’t have let myself get to this point. And, that I know that I can do better than when I came [to school the first time], and I just felt like it was never somewhere where I could see myself.

In her journal reflection from the half-day group session, Brooke further described the disappointment she felt in herself. During the LEAP half-day group session, Brooke felt comfort knowing that everyone was in the same position as a reinstated student.

I asked Brooke about her utilization of the resources and services that were discussed during the half-day group session. Brooke said that she personally found the panel discussion beneficial. She commented, “I liked when the panel came in and they all talked and said the different places we could go for help.” However, she did not utilize any of the resources across campus because of her hectic schedule.

She mentioned that the time management strategies, specifically the weekly calendar, were helpful. However, Brooke admitted that she had not continued using the
weekly calendars distributed during the half-day group session, although she does keep a planner that helped her manage her time. Brooke explained, “Now, I have my own little planner and schedule things out. I make sure I do everything I need to do for that day before I do anything else.”

Brooke worked 32–45 hours per week during her first semester after her academic reinstatement. She intended to work only 2–3 days per week rather than 4–5 days per week. When questioned about her workload, she defended her work schedule stating, “I actually did lose a day at work just because I’m busy with school and there’s a lot of new people [employees] coming in.” Brooke added, “The schedule will get redone for next semester and I can put my available hours. And, I can put what days I can work and when I can’t [work]. So, it’ll change.”

Brooke was now living alone in her apartment. Her former roommate, who was also her cousin, just moved out. During our first interview, Brooke referred to her cousin as a source of encouragement to succeed upon academic reinstatement. However, it appeared living alone was a welcomed change and Brooke was now able to focus on her priorities.

When asked about her priorities, Brooke identified school as her first priority “because that’s, like, the biggest thing in my life right now. I want to graduate college and, eventually, I will probably end up moving back home and going [to school] full-time.” At the time of our second interview, she liked the “quiet time and space” she had living alone in her apartment. However, if she wanted to enroll in more courses per semester in order to
graduate “so I’m not in school for 9 years,” she admitted she had to move home to survive financially.

Brooke identified work as her second priority because it was her passion (“it’s what I want to do”). It was obvious that Brooke enjoyed going to work, commenting, “I want to take over the family business, but it’s easy for me. It’s kind of like second nature to me right now.” She appeared to identify both school and work as interchangeable because her intended major was hospitality management and she was employed by her family-owned restaurant. She explained, “School is what I need to focus on and then work comes along with it.”

Overall, Brooke felt the LEAP intervention program was helpful and should be a continued requirement of academically reinstated students. She thought “it was good to have the mandatory half-day LEAP program [group session].” However, she recommended a mandatory appointment with the Academic Success Center be required as well.

Brooke felt she could have improved her performance as a reinstated student without the mandatory LEAP program “because I was really disappointed in myself the day I got that [reinstatement] letter saying that I was being dismissed.” From Brooke’s perspective, disappointment and failure were enough to motivate her to do well.

Academic status. Brooke earned a 1.80 term GPA. Her cumulative GPA was a 1.81. An overview of her grades is provided in Table 7. Brooke was academically dismissed at the end of the fall 2009 semester because she earned below a 2.0 semester GPA.
Table 7

*Final Grades of the Fall 2009 Semester (Brooke)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Summary #5: Sam.** Sam, a Caucasian male who was originally from a northeast, mid-western hometown, was 21 years old at the time of this study. He previously attended Cooper University (pseudonym), a small, private liberal arts Mennonite institution, during the fall 2006 and spring 2007 semesters. Sam then transferred to Moreland University in fall 2007. He attended Moreland University during the fall 2007 and spring 2008 semesters. Sam was an exploratory major in the College of Undergraduate Studies at Moreland University. At the end of the spring 2008 semester, he was academically dismissed due to his poor academic performance. His cumulative GPA at the time of his dismissal was a 1.47.

**Reinstatement letter.** In his reinstatement letter submitted June 30, 2009, Sam began his letter by describing the reason for his application for academic reinstatement. He outlined his goal of pursuing his education at Moreland University in order to eventually earn his college degree. During his time away from school, Sam became aware of his true passion of writing. He previously attended college as an exploratory major. However, his love of writing led to his decision to apply for academic reinstatement and to declare a journalism major when he meets eligibility requirements.
Sam identified multiple obstacles that influenced his prior academic performance at Moreland University. During the spring 2008 semester, one of Sam’s best friends from his hometown died of a drug overdose while Sam was at school. He attributed his inability to deal with his emotions while still attempting to manage his academic responsibilities as an obstacle. He also stated that the larger class sizes at Moreland University were very different than what he previously experienced at Cooper University. He realized that he needed to reach out to his professors, tutors, and fellow students if he did not fully understand the material being taught.

During his time away from school, he worked to earn money to pay for college when he was able to return. Due to his prior academic performance and subsequent dismissal, Sam lost some of the scholarships and loans he previously received. As a result, he had to pay for a portion of his college tuition out of pocket if he was approved for academic reinstatement. Sam acknowledged, “With me paying for school now, I feel as though I will take it much more seriously since the money will be coming out of my own pocket.”

First interview. My first interview with Sam was conducted on August 25, 2009. When I approached the lobby area of the Student Advising Center to greet Sam, I met a tall, slender man with long, floppy brown hair. He was dressed very casually, as though he was going to work out at the gym. He wore navy basketball shorts that fell just below his knees. Northwest [State] Regional Conference was printed on his bright yellow t-shirt. His black sunglasses hung from the front collar of his t-shirt. We entered into the small interview room and he selected his seat. I proceeded to sit at the table across from
him. He sat up straight with his knees slightly bent and his legs extended out in front of him. Sam’s elbows rested on the table and his hands were slightly crossed.

Sam introduced himself to me as a caring, hardworking individual. He was raised in a northeast, mid-western town. He lived with his mother and his two sisters. He had an older sister, who was graduating at the end of the fall 2009 semester from a large, public, four-year institution in a northeast, mid-western town and a younger sister who was graduating from high school in May 2010. Sam’s father passed away from lymph node cancer in 2002 when Sam was in the eighth grade.

Growing up, education was a priority in his household. Reading took the place of watching television in his family. Homework was to be completed right after school and any other activities had to wait until his parents reviewed his homework. Extra credit was not an option and his dad required Sam and his sisters to complete all extra credit assignments. As Sam reflected, “They [his parents] stressed doing the best that you could and putting all the effort that you could into it [school].”

Sam previously attended Cooper University for one year from fall 2006 to spring 2007. He decided to transfer from this institution because “I didn’t like such a small campus. It was smaller than my high school. So, I really wasn’t happy with that. Sam decided to attend Moreland University because many people from his hometown who he knew attended the same institution. He explained, “They had a lot of good remarks to say about it [Moreland University], and it was far enough away to where I could be separated from my family, but, yet, I could go home if I needed to.”

In describing his previous academic experience at Moreland University, he stated:
I just got caught up living on my own off campus. I think the party scene kinda took place too. Because I came from a smaller school my freshman year at [Cooper University] and it wasn’t nearly as big as here [Moreland University].

His social life was his focal point. Sam described himself as “really social” and “made friends” very easily. He acknowledged that he took his education for granted. He described himself as “lazy.” Sam admitted that there was a severe lack of effort on his part. Sam reflected, “I guess I just didn’t realize how hard you actually have to work [to be a successful student].” He further explained:

Like, in high school and everything, and even at [Cooper University], it was kind of a joke to me that it was so easy to get through classes, and then, actually, when you come to a big college, you actually have to do the work, and actually have to show up, and I really wasn’t doing that.

Sam stated that another factor that contributed to his poor academic performance previously was the larger class sizes. He felt “insecure” about speaking with his professors one-on-one and asking questions about the material being taught in class.

Sam’s typical day as a student during his previous attendance began around 12 noon. He got out of bed and headed to his classes, which were all scheduled in the afternoon. After his classes, he went to a friend’s house and either played video games or watched television. Sam described, “Thursdays and Fridays would be the party nights that I would go party with friends and go to house parties and walk around campus, and all that. Weekends, [I] usually just wanted football games.” He reminisced about the various school sporting events he would attend on the weekends. He was not working
during this time. Attendance contributed to his poor prior academic performance as well because a few of his classes had strict attendance policies.

When asked to describe how he felt when he received his letter stating that he was academically dismissed, Sam peered toward the floor, taking a few moments to reflect. He then looked up at me and slowly described his feelings, stating:

My jaw dropped. I kinda just went blank. I couldn’t believe what happened, and I realized that I did slack off a lot. And, I didn’t know how I was gonna tell my mom that I got dismissed from school. I really wasn’t sure what I was about to be doing for the next year then.

As he walked me through the emotions of receiving his dismissal letter, sadness was evident in his brown eyes. His eyes reflected his emotion as he spoke. Sam actually waited to tell his mother about his academic dismissal until weeks before the fall 2008 semester was to begin. When Sam did tell her of his academic dismissal, he took responsibility for his actions, explaining “it was because of my lack of effort.” Sam’s mother was angry due to his academic dismissal and the fact that he waited to tell her this news.

Sam worked a variety of jobs after being academically dismissed. These positions made Sam aspire to earn a degree and “find a good career to continue on the next chapter of my life.” Because he worked last year, he was in a good position financially. Sam was able to “get some of my money situated for paying rent and all that stuff [other bills] during the year.” Over the last year, Sam was accustomed to setting a schedule for
himself due to his work responsibilities. He also started setting goals for himself. His primary goal was to return to college and earn a college degree.

Sam found support to return to school from two particular family members. His uncle had been a significant presence in Sam’s life since his father’s death. His uncle was happy to know that Sam was attempting to return to school. His mother was very supportive of his decision to apply for academic reinstatement. Sam’s relationship with his mother improved since his academic reinstatement.

Sam’s decision to return to the same institution from which he was previously academically dismissed was due to a variety of factors. He still had friends who attended Moreland University. He liked the proximity to his hometown. Sam acknowledged he really liked the campus and “most of the teachers that I did have were really nice and they did try to help you out.” He admitted there was a lot riding on his decision to return to college. Sam felt that he would be successful upon academic reinstatement, stating:

Because I realize that I have to actually do this or else there won’t be another opportunity for me to come back to [Moreland University]. I actually have to get my grades up, and I have to work hard, which I didn’t do my first year here.

Sam characterized his return to college as a reinstated student as the last opportunity for him to achieve his goal of earning a college degree. Sam hoped to earn a 3.0 semester GPA at the conclusion of the fall 2009 semester. He hoped to employ basic techniques, such as meeting with his instructors, seeking out tutoring assistance, reading his textbooks, taking notes, and listening to his professors during lectures in an effort to improve his academic performance upon academic reinstatement. He also wanted to get
more involved on campus because it would “keep me around campus and keep me busy.”

Sam attributed characteristics, such as focus, hard work, and dedication to being a successful student. Although he admitted he did not exhibit these traits during his previous college attendance, he felt he would as a reinstated student.

Sam aspired to declare journalism as his major in the future due to his discovery of his passion of writing during his time away from college. As he described, “I kinda picked up writing and it helped me out a lot. I realized that I’m actually kinda good at it, so why not just try to do that?” After graduating with his college degree, his goal was to become a sports writer for a sports magazine or for a local paper.

**Second interview.** My second meeting with Sam occurred on November 11, 2009. He was waiting patiently as I approached the lobby area of the Student Advising Center. After we greeted one another, we proceeded to the small meeting room in silence. Sam followed me, walking in unison with my strides. Our next words were exchanged when I instructed him to sit in the chair at the head of the table. As he sat down, he took off his dark blue sock hat and quickly ran his fingers through his hair, attempting to tame his unruly hair. After a few seconds, he stopped fiddling with his hair and began to wipe the palms of his hands on his dark blue jeans. Sam wore a plain grey long-sleeved t-shirt with a white t-shirt underneath. He tugged slightly on the material of his long-sleeved t-shirt, making sure that the arms of his long-sleeved t-shirt fell over his hands, clinching the material with his fingers as he made a fist with each hand.

I began our conversation by asking him about his performance in his classes thus far this semester. He was enrolled in four courses this semester, including history,
journalism, music, and psychology. He did not receive midterm grades because he was considered a sophomore because he had accrued more than 30 credit hours. He self-reported earning a grade of an ‘A’ in journalism and music at that point in the semester. He self-reported earning a grade of ‘C’ in the history and psychology courses. He stated the majority of assignments and exams remained in the last portion of the semester. Therefore, Sam was optimistic his grades would increase in both the history and psychology courses.

Sam reflected on his participation in the LEAP program. He talked about his feelings toward the mandatory half-day group session. Prior to attending the half-day group session, Sam was uncertain of the beneficial aspects of the session, referring to it as “a waste of time.” However, his feelings quickly changed as he discovered that he was in the company of many other students who had experienced academic obstacles previously and were academically reinstated. Sam stated:

When I sat down and realized that so many other people also went through the same things that I went through, and that they were working hard to get back to where I was, I didn’t feel so outcast, I guess you could say. And, so, I think that helped give me a lot more confidence coming back into school.

Sam identified the panel discussion as the most beneficial component of the half-day group session. He found the stories of the panel members inspirational and motivating, stating that he felt “it [succeeding upon academic reinstatement] can be done.” Sam also acknowledged his utilization of the Academic Success Center and the two appointments he had with his academic advisor this semester.
After attending the half-day group session, Sam had considered scheduling an appointment with the clinical psychologist in the Health Center. He was concerned about his ability to successfully transition back into school. As Sam described:

I just wasn’t sure if I was gonna be able to get everything back in a smooth order since I had been gone for a year. I didn’t know how my transition back to school would be and I figured if it got to a bad point that a counselor is what most people would usually seek out.

However, after starting school, he felt that an appointment with a counselor was unnecessary.

When asked about the strategies discussed during the half-day group session, Sam stated he utilized many of the strategies discussed. During high school and even during his previous attendance in college, Sam acknowledged he did not study regularly. Sam explained, “My study skills are greatly improved. I never had to study though high school and when I got to college, it kinda kept the same notion. I didn’t study as much as I should have.” After his academic reinstatement, Sam studied much more regularly, stating, “I found myself studying quite a few hours a week now.” He admitted that he “wouldn’t really read books” when he previously attended college. His approach to classes changed this semester as an academically reinstated student. Sam stated, “I’ve actually started reading the books and I take all the notes when I’m in class. I used to not do that as much as I do now. And, I go over it also that day.”

Sam utilized the time management strategies to assist with his time management skills this semester. His first priority remained school, followed closely by his focus on
his health. His health was very important to Sam. He paid much attention to his health and staying fit. He did not have a job during his first semester after his academic reinstatement, although he planned to get a job during the holiday break.

The reason Sam felt the LEAP program was helpful for academically reinstated students was because it required students to reflect and to have a plan to be successful upon return to college. He further explained, “Without it [the LEAP program], I think a lot of people come in not thinking or not having an idea how they can improve what they did wrong in the first place.” He felt the discussion group gave academically reinstated students the opportunity to share their previous academic obstacles and “helped us realize what we could do to turn that around and not let it happen again.” Sam felt it would have been helpful to hold academically reinstated students accountable throughout the entire semester, stating,

I thought it would have been kind of a good idea to keep track of [the scheduled advising sessions to determine] if people really did go three times [to see their academic advisor] this semester because I know I didn’t actually live up to that, but I wanted to.

Sam felt the LEAP program positively contributed to his academic performance after academic reinstatement. He stated, “A lot of the things that I learned about from the LEAP program I took in and actually used. And, it helped me schedule my time and stay on track with school.” Sam admitted he felt he could have improved his academic performance without participating in the LEAP program. However, the LEAP program placed his thoughts into action. Sam explained:
I think I came into it [this semester as an academically reinstated student] with a good mindset of accomplishing what I wanted to get accomplished, but with the LEAP program, it made me sit down and get it all out on paper. Get my goals and my priorities and everything out on paper. [After attending the half-day group session of the LEAP program,] I kinda wanted to do it even more than just when I was telling myself what I wanted to do.

Sam worked toward his goal of declaring his major in journalism with the hopes of becoming a writer for a sports magazine one day. He felt this was still a realistic goal. He needed a cumulative 2.75 GPA to eventually declare journalism as his major. Sam hoped to earn a 3.0 semester GPA at the end of the fall term.

\textit{Academic status.} Sam earned a 2.75 term GPA. His cumulative GPA was a 1.94. An overview of his grades is provided in Table 8. Sam remained on academic probation because his cumulative GPA was below a 2.0. However, he was able to continue into the spring semester because he earned over a 2.0 semester GPA.

\textbf{Table 8} \hfill

\textit{Final Grades of the Fall 2009 Semester (Sam)}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\hline  
Course & Final Grade \\
\hline  
History & D+ \\
Journalism & B- \\
Music & A \\
Psychology & B \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
**Case Summary #6: Elizabeth.** Elizabeth, an African American female who lived in a northeast, mid-western town, was 40 years old. She previously attended Moreland University for two terms, spring 2000 and fall 2000. She was an exploratory major in the College of Undergraduate Studies. At the end of the fall 2000 semester, she was academically dismissed due to her poor academic performance. Her cumulative GPA at the time of her dismissal was a 0.33.

**Reinstatement letter.** In her reinstatement letter received June 26, 2009, Elizabeth described the multiple factors attributed to her prior academic dismissal. When she previously attended Moreland University, Elizabeth was a full-time student, employed full-time, while raising two small children as a single mother. Soon, the responsibilities of school, work, and family became too much for one individual to balance. In Elizabeth’s words:

At one moment all was well, but when things started getting out of control with my sons [sic] health, babysitting, transportation, finances I was juggling everything but not truly focusing on the main things my grades I thought I could pull though [sic] when inside I knew it was failing all at once.

Admittedly, she was not able to focus on her academics as she needed in order to be a successful student.

Elizabeth decided to apply for academic reinstatement because her goal was to complete her college degree. Her daughter was entering her freshman year of college in fall 2009 and her son was 10 years old. Because her children were older now, it allowed her the opportunity to focus on advancing her education.
Elizabeth acknowledged that she would need to utilize services, such as Adult Services, academic advising, and tutoring, all of which she previously did not seek assistance. As Elizabeth stated:

I know that I have the dedication, commitment, maturity that it takes to complete my degree. I know that I can utilize all the services that is offered to me at the University that I didn’t previously, because I thought I could hold it all together without help, which I realize that every now and again everyone needs a little help.

Elizabeth discussed her intention of becoming “part of the campus community with other adults non-tradition [sic] students like myself.”

Elizabeth’s ultimate goal after earning her college degree was to become a nurse and to maintain stable employment. As she mentioned, “with age comes experience.” With that said, from Elizabeth’s perspective, “I don’t have no [sic] time to waste” in the pursuit of her academic and career goals.

First interview. My first interview with Elizabeth was conducted on August 25, 2009. I waited briefly in the lobby area of the Student Advising Center for Elizabeth. She arrived approximately 10 minutes late for our scheduled interview. She discussed her obstacles with finding a parking spot as I led her back to the interview room. I gave her a few moments to get settled in her seat at the head of the table. She fumbled through her large brown purse placing her keys in a side compartment of the purse. The purse remained open on the table with Elizabeth’s personal belongings, including a large calendar stuffed with papers, fully exposed. She wore a hot pink cotton sweat suit with brown open toe sandals. Elizabeth was a heavier set woman with black hair. Her smile
demonstrated a welcoming and positive personality. She let me know when she was ready to begin her interview.

When asked to introduce herself, Elizabeth stated that she graduated from an inner city high school in the northeast in the 1980s. After graduating high school, she had a daughter and was a single mother. Years later, she attended a trade school in a northeast, mid-western city to become a dental assistant. She decided to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse and enrolled at Moreland University during the spring 2000 term. At that time, Elizabeth worked full-time on a third shift. Her daughter was approximately eight years old and her son was less than a year old. She described this time in her life as “taxing for me, but I was still determined to complete at least a year.” In order to attend the institution, she moved her family approximately one hour from her hometown to the town encompassing Moreland University. Therefore, she did not have a support system in the local area.

At the end of the spring 2000 semester, Elizabeth earned a 0.67 semester GPA. She was able to continue in the fall 2000 semester, but was on academic probation. She acknowledged she was overwhelmed at that time, but “I knew that I could do it because I like to learn.” The primary obstacle at that time was her lack of time to dedicate to her academics and studying. She was working full-time to support her family. As Elizabeth described, “[When the] weekend came, I was drained and by the time classes come [back around the next week], I was prepared, but not fully prepared. I just winged through it and I failed my tests.” She utilized the Academic Success Center during her previous attendance at the institution, but this assistance didn’t effectively compensate for her other
obstacles, such as her lack of time and her outside responsibilities. Besides the demands of her full-time employment, Elizabeth identified laziness as another obstacle during her previous enrollment in college. She explained:

I’m lazy. I just didn’t want to do it. I just didn’t have the tenacity to just get up and do it. I knew I wanted it, but, at the same time. I was like, “Whatever.” But, yeah, it was just laziness. Just being lazy.

Although Elizabeth labeled herself as lazy, she stated that she attended every class during her prior academic enrollment in college.

Elizabeth remembered receiving her academic dismissal letter. She was not surprised to learn she had been academically dismissed. Elizabeth reflected:

I knew it was going to happen, but it just hit me. It’s just, like, I just felt like I didn’t accomplish anything. It was a hard blow. I think I sat and looked at the letter for at least an hour because I knew that everything that I wanted I didn’t do. I did not do what I was set out to do.

Elizabeth was disappointed in herself. She found the hardest person to tell that she was academically dismissed was her daughter. Elizabeth was also frustrated because she felt as though she had wasted her money in the form of loans in pursuing her college degree.

After she was academically dismissed at the end of the fall 2000 semester, Elizabeth enrolled at a local institute for medical billing. She wasn’t completely satisfied with the program because she truly wanted to pursue nursing, not medical billing. As she stated, “The billing part was just something I could pursue as far as staying home and still being able to raise my kids. It was just an option. I wanted to become a nurse.”
Elizabeth decided to apply for academic reinstatement due to multiple reasons. Her children were older and more self-sufficient. She was unemployed. She wanted to earn her degree in nursing. Elizabeth described the excitement of learning her application for reinstatement was approved. As she talked about that moment of learning that she was able to return to college, she continued to smile and giggle. She described the happiness and pride she felt given the opportunity to pursue her education. She expressed the range of emotions she experienced on her journey to return to college. Elizabeth was apprehensive about returning to the classroom setting due to the length of time since her last attendance. She attempted to view this apprehension about her age and the length of time since her last attendance in college as a source of motivation.

Elizabeth discussed the responsibilities she assumed in the past as a caretaker for various family members, including her mother and grandfather. Recently, her uncle had taken an active role in the care of her grandfather. She discussed her return to school with her mother and made her aware that her appointments would have to fit into her school schedule. Elizabeth noted:

I cannot allow anybody to get in my way as far as me trying to complete my degree. And, that’s just how it is. Before, I had everyone in my way. Everybody can just pull me here, there, and everywhere. And, I allowed that to happen.

Elizabeth admitted she would have to limit her weekend visits to her hometown where her mother, family, and friends still reside. She enjoyed her weekend visits, but the reason for her move to the town encompassing Moreland University 10 years ago was to pursue and
finish her college education. As Elizabeth reflected, “That’s ten years I wasted where I could have been graduated, working on my master’s [degree].”

She was eager to get back in the routine of school and studying. She knew she had to adjust her previous study habits in order to be a successful student. Elizabeth admitted studying was an obstacle for her. She intended to go to the library to study in order to focus and to avoid the distractions of home. She also evaluated her time management skills. As she talked about the need for her to “keep everything on task,” she grabbed her personal calendar from her purse, which was sitting next to her on the table. Elizabeth paged through the personal calendar as she stated, “I always keep a schedule as you can see here. And, I’ve always had it [a calendar], but I use it more now than ever.” Another component of Elizabeth’s time management was her intention to work part-time as a student employee for the campus bus service. Elizabeth acknowledged she had to balance the demands of work, family, and school.

In order to be successful, Elizabeth felt she had to remain focused and determined, and set goals. She also stated that she knows that she would have to look to others for support. She would not just need the support of her family, but the support of various departments across campus, including the Student Advising Center, the Adult Services Center, and the Academic Success Center, specifically for mathematics tutoring.

Elizabeth’s age once again surfaced in our conversation. She admitted her return as an academically reinstated student was more meaningful as an older student. Elizabeth viewed her academic reinstatement as a “second chance.” She later reinforced her rationale associated with applying for reinstatement during the reflection piece of the
LEAP half-day group session, stating, “I don’t have the many distraction [sic] in my life that I had previously. I have something to finish. I owe it to myself and my family.” She felt her reinstatement and participation in the LEAP program “brings me closer to getting nursing completion, my kids can see it [earn a college degree] can be done at any time.”

Elizabeth’s goal was to earn her nursing degree, possibly pursue a master’s degree in nursing, and to work in “the case management part of nursing.” Elizabeth’s goals were to earn a minimum 2.0 semester GPA without withdrawing or receiving an ‘F’ in any of her courses. She wanted to complete her prerequisites and general electives for the nursing degree.

Second interview. My second meeting with Elizabeth occurred on November 11, 2009. Elizabeth arrived approximately 15 minutes late for our scheduled meeting. She was obviously flustered. She began apologizing for her late arrival as she entered the lobby area. Her son trailed behind her through the door of the Student Advising Center. Elizabeth asked if it would be okay for her son to sit in the lobby area of the Student Advising Center during our interview. I replied affirmatively and she spent the next few minutes making sure that he was fully aware of the rules while she was meeting with me in the small interview room. Her son listened attentively as she spoke. He looked at her directly from the seat he had chosen immediately upon entering the lobby. As Elizabeth concluded her discussion with her son, he took out his handheld gaming device and quickly became engrossed in the graphics on the screen.

Elizabeth then turned to me and said she was ready to begin our interview. As we walked to the interview room, Elizabeth was breathing deeply and obviously winded,
fumbling with her purse and her clothes with every step. She wore a plain white sweatshirt underneath a worn jean jacket. When we entered the interview room, she placed her large, open brown purse on the table. The contents of her purse, including a bulk of papers within a small book and a black wallet filled to capacity with crumpled receipts, were exposed. Elizabeth adjusted her grey sweatpants before she sat down in the chair at the head of the table. I organized my materials to allow her more time to catch her breath and get settled. Elizabeth made eye contact with me, signaling she was ready to begin our conversation.

When I asked Elizabeth to describe her experience returning to school this semester, she nervously giggled, looking away and repeating multiple times, “Crazy.” When I asked her to explain further, Elizabeth identified the need for a routine as an obstacle. She stated, “It’s just getting back into the groove of studying and prioritizing my time to study.” Elizabeth explained she attended class until 3:00 p.m. on most days. Thereafter, Elizabeth was torn between her family obligations and her academic responsibilities. Elizabeth explained:

I get home with my son and get him together and start cooking or something. Around the house, there’s always something to do, but I learned that I can just push it to the side until a weekend or if I have time in the mornings, which I did this semester. I had some time in the mornings where I can take care of those things.

As Elizabeth detailed the obstacles she encountered this semester, she spoke with a smile on her face and intermittently giggled while she depicted her experience returning to
college. She referred to these obstacles as “rolling back into my old habits that got me where I was at before.” Elizabeth described her old habits as times when she “would just fall off [of her routine], push everything to the side, and let other things occupy my time.”

Elizabeth mentioned her mathematics course as one of the obstacles this semester that has resulted in her falling back into her old habits and off of a routine. Elizabeth referred to the subject of mathematics as “hard.” She experienced some family obligations in her hometown that resulted in her missing her mathematics class. Elizabeth felt her mathematics instructor was less than understanding of her situation and her non-traditional student status. Elizabeth commented, “The instructor don’t [sic] even take into consideration that there are students other than freshmen, older than 20, that’s in the class.” Elizabeth acknowledged she was not putting forth the necessary effort to be successful in the class. She stated, “I wasn’t keeping up like I was supposed to.”

Elizabeth failed the 7.5 week mathematics course, but she registered for the mathematics course again in the second 7.5 week session of the same semester. She had a different instructor, who “is a lot better.” He gave quizzes at the beginning of every class “to keep us on top of what we [are] supposed to do.” Elizabeth acknowledged she worked with a tutor for a portion of the first mathematics course and was working with the tutor for assistance with the second mathematics course. Although she was optimistic, stating, “It’s working out a lot [better],” Elizabeth also admitted attendance was an issue with her current mathematics course. Elizabeth stated, “I didn’t go [to class yesterday]. I don’t wanna go to class today. I don’t wanna be bothered. It’s frustrating me. It’s making my stomach hurt. I just don’t wanna be bothered.”
The conversation quickly took a much different turn. As Elizabeth voiced her frustration in her mathematics course, she began questioning her enrollment in college altogether. She leaned forward in her chair with her hands planted firmly on the table.

Her gaze was piercing. Elizabeth stated:

I ain’t [sic] got no money. I need a job. Why am I back here? I don’t—it’s not gaining me what I need to do today, but I have to look at everything as to why I’m back in here [college]. I want my diploma. I want to do what I’m supposed to do.

I want to be a nurse. That’s the reason I’m here.

As Elizabeth spoke, her voice raised and her pace increased while she talked. It was evident she had spent much time questioning her attendance in college. She spoke passionately and her demeanor reflected her frustration with college and her uncertainty of the future.

Just as quickly as the conversation changed from the topic of the mathematics course to her uncertainty of the future of her academic career, Elizabeth reflected on how she coped with her doubt and frustration regarding her enrollment in college. She sat back in her chair. Her hands were moving in a back and forth motion as she rubbed her upper legs almost as if she was wiping away the sweat from her palms. With a smile, she stated, “I have to just stop and take a breath and get back into it [academics].” Elizabeth began to assume responsibility for the position she encountered academically. She reflected:

One thing that I have learned since I’ve been here, back here [in college], is that it was always up to me to do what I was supposed to do. It wasn’t up to nobody else
to go to class, to find your way of studying, to just find your niche and your place within the university or in your classes. It wasn’t. It’s nobody [sic] responsibility. It’s not my mother’s, my sister’s, it’s nobody [sic] responsibility, but me because I’m the one that put myself in this place and in the other predicaments that I have done in the past and as up to now. It’s me.

Elizabeth appeared genuine in her comments. It was evident she understood the factors that contributed to her prior poor academic performance and held herself accountable for her academic pitfalls and during her prior attendance in college and this semester.

I transitioned the conversation to her specific academic performance in her classes at this point in the semester. She was enrolled in the following classes this semester: English, mathematics, sociology, and study strategies. As mentioned previously, she failed the mathematics course and had stopped attending the 7.5-weeks course with 3 weeks remaining. She was now retaking the mathematics course during the last 7.5 weeks of the semester. Elizabeth’s midterm grade in the Introduction to English course was a ‘C-.’ The course content was focused on African American culture and included readings of prominent African American authors. When asked about her academic performance in this course, she stated:

I love to write, but it makes me think too much. And, I know that’s what it’s all for and all, on the black culture and inequalities with blacks just in general. It was just touching things that I just didn’t wanna talk about. And it’s something that I had to deal with.
Elizabeth added, “I didn’t ever have to open up, so just opening up on different topics that affected me as a person, as a woman, and as a black person, I just didn’t wanna do it.”

Since the posting of her midterm grade, Elizabeth sat down with her instructor, who worked with Elizabeth to address her emotions related to the content of the course and to use the writing assignments as a means to voice her thoughts. Her instructor provided her with a lot of confidence in her writing. Her willingness to meet with Elizabeth about her obstacles within the class demonstrated that she was a source of support for Elizabeth, who felt comfortable approaching her with questions or concerns. Elizabeth felt that a final grade of a ‘B’ was realistic at that point.

Elizabeth posted a midterm grade of ‘D’ in her sociology course. She attributed her poor performance to simply not studying. She explained, “I thought that I could just go over the material a little bit and know it.” She posted a midterm grade of ‘F’ in the study strategies course. Once again, Elizabeth explained she did not study and missed assignments. Elizabeth felt she still could increase the final grades in the sociology and the study strategies courses.

Elizabeth felt the LEAP program positively influenced her academic performance this semester. Walking into the LEAP half-day group session, Elizabeth described the session as not “intimidating” as she learned about everyone’s “story that got them [here].” She talked about her feelings as a reinstated student prior to starting courses, stating:

At first, I didn’t think I was gonna make it. I was scared, but I was happy. But, I just felt like I was gonna fall into the same pattern, that I was gonna just let it [the
semester] roll on by and get dismissed. And, I felt like I was gonna get into the same trap, but I know I can’t fall back into the same trap that I was in.

By participating in the LEAP program, Elizabeth was encouraged to succeed as a reinstated student. It increased her confidence as a reinstated student.

Elizabeth utilized a variety of the resources discussed during the half-day group session. She met with both a tutor and a mentor in the Academic Success Center. She met regularly with her academic advisor, Donna (pseudonym), in the Student Advising Center. Elizabeth also utilized Psychological Services. In regard to academic strategies, Elizabeth implemented the time management and goal setting strategies discussed during the half-day group session.

Elizabeth also found the reflection activities beneficial. She regarded the time reflecting on her standing as a reinstated student as especially helpful. She enjoyed writing “down my plans, goals being committed to my reinstatement, focusing on what I need to do to stay in school.” There were no aspects of the LEAP program that she did not find beneficial.

Elizabeth stated she felt that she could have succeeded without participating in an academic intervention program, such as the LEAP program. She commented, “I would have succeeded, but it would probably would [sic] have been harder. Yeah, it would have been harder.” However, she felt an academic intervention program is beneficial for reinstated students. Elizabeth explained,
You just can’t reinstate a student and be, like, ‘Okay. Bye. Go.’ Because they’ll fall into the same obstacles that they did to get them [here] in the first [place and] in the same situation that they’re in to get reinstated.

She felt an academic intervention program for reinstated students should be mandatory and reinstated students should be required “to come and meet with their [academic] advisors every 3 weeks.” During the advising sessions, reinstated students would have to review their academic performance and attendance in each class. However, she mentioned requiring forms to be signed by instructors on a periodic basis to outline the academic performance of reinstated students in their courses that would then be given to academic advisors.

Elizabeth still had the goal of pursuing nursing as her major. However, she had discussions with her academic advisor, Donna, about possibly considering other health-oriented majors. She wanted to schedule an appointment with the Career Services Center to “explore” other career options. She needed a cumulative 2.50 GPA to eventually declare pre-nursing as her major and then she would have to apply for admission into the nursing program thereafter.

*Academic status.* Elizabeth earned a 1.72 term GPA. Her cumulative GPA was a 0.86. An overview of her grades is provided in Table 9. Elizabeth was eligible for academic dismissal at the end of the fall 2009 semester because she earned below a 2.0 semester GPA. However, after meeting with Elizabeth and Donna, her academic advisor, to discuss her performance during the 2009 Fall semester, the assistant dean of the
College of Undergraduate Studies decided to allow Elizabeth the opportunity to return for the 2010 Spring semester.

Table 9

*Final Grades of the Fall 2009 Semester (Elizabeth)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (retake of above course)</td>
<td>SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Strategies</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

An overview of the components of the LEAP academic intervention program was provided. Participant profiles of the six previously academically dismissed students who participated in the study were presented. The participant profiles included information collected through the analysis of the reinstatement letters and two individual qualitative face-to-face interviews, and the academic transcripts. The background of each academically reinstated student was provided in an effort to create a well-rounded understanding of the factors that contributed to each participant’s prior poor academic performance. The rationale associated with each participant’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement was presented. The case summaries for all participants included insight into their individual experiences within the LEAP academic intervention program.
as well as throughout their first semester after academic reinstatement. Information collected from the analysis of the reflection assignment and the LEAP journal reflection was included. Final term GPA, cumulative GPA, and academic status earned at the end of the first semester upon academic reinstatement was provided. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings of this study.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was mentioned in the previous chapters:

1. Identify the factors that influenced the decision to apply for reinstatement of previously academically dismissed students.
2. Examine how participation in an academic intervention program assists academically reinstated students to succeed upon reinstatement.

This chapter presents the results of the data collection and analysis, which includes extracts from the interviews, documents, and observations. The findings of this study are presented in two separate sections. Part One summarizes the findings related to the factors that influenced the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed. Part Two summarizes the findings associated with how participation in an academic intervention program improves the academic performance of previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students after academic reinstatement.

Research Question One

What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed?

Six themes emerged from the data collected which addressed the first research question: role of family, role of peers, role of a second chance opportunity, role of stipulations associated with the completion of a college degree, role of person’s perceived
self-efficacy, and role of person’s self-worth. Each theme is presented with supplemental data to support the emergence of that particular theme in the paragraphs below.

**Role of Family**

All of the participants in this study identified one or more family members who influenced their decisions to return to college and apply for academic reinstatement. In some cases, this influential presence in the participants’ lives resulted in a feeling of personal empowerment (motivation, encouragement, support, and inspiration) in the reinstated students. In other circumstances, the role of a family member or members was perceived influence in the participants’ lives due to a negative connotation. As described in the paragraphs below, the participants attributed their decision to apply for academic reinstatement to the influence of a family member or members for an assortment of reasons.

Amber discussed a variety of situations which I would describe as her challenging the influence of her family. Amber accused her parents of previously forcing her to attend college and insisted that she not reside in on-campus housing. Even when Amber discussed the moment in which she informed her parents of her academic dismissal, there was a sense of combativeness against the perceived control of her mother in particular. She stated, “After her [Amber’s mother] being the one to mainly push with me going to school, it [telling her parents about her academic dismissal] really didn’t bother me. I was just like, ‘Whatever.’”

Amber continued to detail the perceived control of her mother as we conversed about her interests regarding majors during her prior academic experience. Although
Amber was an exploratory major during her first semester in college, she was very clear in pointing out that her mother selected her potential path of education, rather than allowing Amber the freedom to explore and decide for herself. Amber described her attempt to separate herself from her parents since her academic dismissal, stating, “I kind of detached myself from my parents and was like, ‘Hey, I’m gonna go out and do all my partying now. Get it all out of the way. Do something I’m not supposed to.’”

Even with the encouragement of her parents, the decision of applying for academic reinstatement to college was one that Amber did not pursue until she wanted to return. From her perspective, Amber felt she “didn’t want them [her parents] on her back telling me that I had to go because that’s what made me not want to go [to college] in the first place.” Amber deliberated whether she did this “just to prove a point.” Regardless, Amber wanted to attend college on her own terms and based upon her own timeframe.

Ironically, Amber decided to return to the same institution from which she was previously academically dismissed because it was close to home. She wanted to be able to go home (to her dad’s house) when she wanted. She also wanted to have the option to study at her dad’s house “if studying on campus is an issue.” She mentioned her dad’s house was in walking distance. This rationale for attending the same institution from which she was dismissed was confusing to me considering she previously mentioned her dissatisfaction with getting up for classes, having to take the bus, and not living on-campus while residing at her dad’s house.

Courtney acknowledged the support of her family in her decision to apply for academic reinstatement. She stated that “they are 100% for me being here [at the
Moreland University]. They are just worried.” The concern shared by her parents was attributed to their perception of the institution as a “party school.” They believed she could succeed, but “it’s pretty much out of their hands and they know that.”

Scott’s wife was a significant factor in his decision to apply for academic reinstatement. She, herself, earned her Bachelor’s degree from the same institution in which Scott was previously academically dismissed. She was a source of inspiration because she graduated “with almost a 4.0 GPA.” She considered returning to school to pursue her Master’s degree. It was obvious that his wife’s focus on her academics motivated Scott to pursue his own personal educational goals.

Scott admitted his mother and stepfather influenced his decision to apply for reinstatement and to return to college, but for very different reasons compared to his wife’s influence. Scott explained:

I look at them [his mother and stepfather] and that’s what I don’t wanna be because they’ve had failed businesses. They’re in financial trouble, all that stuff.

I just use them as an example of what can happen to me if I don’t work hard.

Instead of his own parents, Scott talked extensively about the positive influence his mother-in-law and father-in-law had on his decision to apply for reinstatement to college. They both worked in education. He reflected, “They’re devoted to their careers and to each other. They’re devoted to their family.” Scott attributed the “comfortable life” of his in-laws to their hard work and dedication to their careers and family. They have provided both Scott and his wife continuous support during their time together.
They provided monetary support to aid with closing costs for the purchase of their home and to help in furnishing their home. Scott stated:

So, I’m very fortunate that I have these things. That my wife has these things and, in return, I take care of their daughter. I do what I can. And, this is one of the things they want me to do in return to better myself, go to school, graduate, be a better person for it. That’s something that my mother-in-law has been telling me since I met her six years ago. “You need to get back into school.”

Scott characterized his in-laws as “supportive” and a “driving force” for his return to college and his pursuit of a college degree.

Brooke’s family was “100%” behind her decision to return to college and to pursue a college degree, although her stepfather was more understanding if she decided not to attend college because he never attended college. Brooke’s goal of potentially taking over the family-owned restaurant and catering business was also a source of motivation for her in returning to school.

Sam’s family, specifically his uncle, who “took over as guardian of me” when his dad passed away, and his mother were two influential people in his decision to apply for academic reinstatement and to return to school. Sam acknowledged, “My uncle is a big person in my life.” As he spoke about his uncle, Sam spoke with a genuine and sincere manner. He stated, “I know that me getting kicked out of school really disappointed him [his uncle]. So, me getting back into school, he was really happy about [it] and realizing that I wasn’t just doing nothing [sic] with my life.” His mother was very supportive of his return to college. His relationship with his mother has improved since he was
academically reinstated. Sam was able to communicate openly with his mother. He further explained, he could “get some advice from her. Before, I was kinda afraid because I felt, like, since I was dismissed that she kinda looked down on me. I felt bad going to her for advice.”

Elizabeth identified various family members, who have been a source of motivation for her to return to college to pursue her college education. Elizabeth described her desire to be a role model for her children, especially her daughter. She explained, “I want to be a graduate, too. And, that way, she [her daughter] sees that I’m pushing toward it [earning a college degree], and then she’ll do it too. I know she’s a go-getter. But, it’s good that she sees me actually doing it too.” The timing in Elizabeth’s life was also optimal to apply for academic reinstatement because her daughter recently graduated from high school and her son was of an age where he was less dependent. She also received motivation and support from her sister.

**Role of Peers**

In addition to seeking a personal support system within their family, for the majority of the participants, the decision to apply for academic reinstatement was influenced by their peers. For these participants, it was a best friend, a boyfriend, a cousin, or old friends who were a source of motivation to apply for academic reinstatement. The role of peers as a theme is described in the below paragraphs.

Amber’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement and return to college was influenced by her best friend, who had recently graduated from high school. Amber discussed how her best friend almost did not graduate from high school. Amber saw a lot
of the same characteristics, such as not wanting to get up to attend school and the lack of desire to attend school, in her best friend. Amber described that she helped to motivate her best friend to finish high school by waking her up and driving her to school every day. Her best friend graduated and they planned to attend college and live on-campus together. Amber perceived this situation as a motivating factor in returning to college stating,

I really didn’t want to do it on my own because I knew I wouldn’t. And, so, I made a deal with her [Amber’s best friend]. And, she followed through on her part [graduating from high school], and so we’re both coming [to college] this year.

As Amber talked, it sounded as though she was placing much more emphasis on helping her best friend succeed in college rather than focusing on her own needs.

Courtney’s boyfriend was a source of motivation and a primary reason why she chose to apply for academic reinstatement. Courtney stated he was “pushing her all the way.” He was currently enrolled at the same institution and had one year remaining to complete his college degree and graduate.

During her first interview, Brooke described her cousin, who was also her roommate, as someone who was a source of encouragement for her to apply for academic reinstatement and return to school. Brooke noted, “She [her cousin] said that she would help me whether I needed to study or if I was struggling or something.” During the second interview, Brooke’s cousin appeared to be more of a source of distraction as a roommate rather than a source of encouragement. Brooke explained:
My roommate just moved out. So, I’m all by myself in the apartment. So, I don’t have to worry about her doing her own thing and getting on my nerves, always leaving the radio on or [saying], “Let’s do this. Let’s do that.” It’s just me now and I can focus.

Although Sam did not specifically identify one particular peer as an influential presence in his decision to apply for academic reinstatement, he mentioned that his friends were still attending the Moreland University. He was eager to return to school and find “a place with my friends.” Sam also verbalized his excitement of meeting new friends, stating, “I can’t wait to get back on campus and meet new people and continue my education.”

Elizabeth and Scott, the two oldest participants in the study (age 40 and 26, respectively), did not identify the role of peers as a factor influencing their decision to apply for academic reinstatement. If questioned about the role of their peers in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement, Elizabeth and Scott might have revealed a peer who encouraged or motivated them to return to school. At the same time, the role of peers was not mentioned as a factor contributing to their decision to apply for academic reinstatement.

**Role of a Second Chance Opportunity**

Although many different terms were used, a common theme among participants was the acknowledgment of the immense significance of academic reinstatement in their respective lives. Academic reinstatement could be viewed as offering the possibility of a job or career post-graduation or the potential for increased opportunities (money, stable
employment) in the future. A common thread among the participants was the theme of academic reinstatement offering the prospect of earning a college education. The terms varied between “second chance,” “last chance,” “opportunity,” “new beginnings,” and “wake-up call,” but the meaning was comparable among the participants. Academic reinstatement opened the door for the potential of returning to school and earning a college degree. The role of a second chance opportunity as a theme is exemplified in the below paragraphs.

Amber used a variety of phrases, including “start over,” “a new beginning,” and “a new chance,” to articulate the opportunity that academic reinstatement offered her. Yet, she did not indicate in her reinstatement letter why she chose to return to the same Moreland University where she faltered academically two years prior. The statement that I felt truly summarized Amber’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement was, “This is a new beginning and a chance to prove I can graduate, get a degree, and start my life in the real world.”

Courtney described her desire to apply for academic reinstatement as a “second chance.” She stated, “They [the institution] really saved me [by academically reinstating her].” Her perspective of this second chance opportunity after academic reinstatement and returning to college was reiterated when she met with the dean regarding her application for reinstatement. She shared a comment the assistant dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies made during her meeting with him that resonated with her. Courtney reflected,
He [the assistant dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies] said, “You are, by far, probably one of the worst students I have ever seen.” And, that really hit home that I’m lucky. I’m very, very, very lucky to be reinstated. She appreciated his honesty, commenting, “I was waiting for somebody to actually say that to me because no one had.”

Scott was honest in acknowledging possible disappointment that might occur as a result of this opportunity of academic reinstatement. He explained:

I’m so afraid of that [receiving a letter of academic dismissal] happening because I know this is my last chance here [at the Moreland University from which he was previously academically dismissed], and I don’t want to screw it up. That’s the thing that makes me the most anxious and nervous about it because I don’t want to mess up. But, I’m not gonna let myself.

Sam described returning to college as a reinstated student as:

Getting a second chance to fulfill a goal of mine, which was to get a diploma [college degree]. It means I am gonna have to work hard and keep myself in school, because I don’t get another chance after this one.

Elizabeth referred to her academic reinstatement as a “second chance.” She further explained, “They’re [the institution] allowing me to prove to them that I can do it [successfully complete her college education]. That’s amazing. And, a lot of people take it for granted, but I can’t take that for granted.” Elizabeth elaborated:
I’ve really been preparing myself mentally, like, “Okay, [Elizabeth]. You only got one more chance.” This is my last chance. This is my last chance to do what I have to do and I can’t let nobody get in my way of me being 40.

In her reinstatement letter, Brooke mentioned her hope that she would be given “the chance of reinstatement.” However, Brooke referred to her previous academic dismissal as a “wake-up call.” The realization “that I needed to take college more seriously” influenced not only her decision to apply for academic reinstatement, but it also prompted Brooke to make significant changes in her personal life, including adhering to a work schedule and placing herself in a better financial position, in preparation for her return to school.

Role of Stipulations Associated With the Completion of a College Degree

All participants in this study cited the goal of completing their college education as a factor influencing their decision to apply for academic reinstatement. Whether they referred to graduation from college or earning a college degree, the participants in this study were hoping to eventually complete their academic journey after applying for academic reinstatement and returning to school. Although the ultimate goal of completing their college education was a common theme, the participants’ responses varied regarding their motivation in completing their college education. With the exception of Courtney, all of the other participants felt graduation from college or earning a college degree was a stipulation in the achievement of an alternate resultant goal (i.e., employment, better paying job, career, more lucrative position, overcome unemployment).
Amber felt the only way of achieving her future goals was by going to college. She commented, “You can’t really do anything these days without a college degree.” Amber did not insinuate that she valued her education. Rather, Amber’s motivation of completing her college education was due to her perceived importance of education within U.S. society today. Amber stated, “School is very important in this day and age and I feel that I have now come to understand that more than ever.”

Scott’s goal to earn a college degree in nursing had developed as a result of his experience in the United States Navy. Scott initially wanted to be a medic after he was honorably discharged from the United States Navy. He felt that he was “truly happy in my life” when he worked as a medic for two years while serving in the military. Scott explained:

So, for me to go here [to Moreland University], it’s just another stepping stone to doing the same thing [providing healthcare to people], but as a civilian. Because, in the military, what I went to school for doesn’t transfer to a career out here. Because, what I did, you have to have a degree to do. So, for me to do what I truly wanna do, I have to go to school. So, my career goal is to basically become that doctor or that nurse or whatever and help people.

As Scott summarized at the end of his reinstatement letter, “I realize I have plenty to prove, however, I am willing to do whatever it takes to receive my degree in nursing and use my knowledge to help others.”

Brooke’s primary goal in returning to college “is to graduate [from college] and have a [college] degree.” Brooke wanted the opportunity to obtain a better paying job. In
her reinstatement letter, Brooke stated her goals were to “go to school, and I want to graduate, and have a good job.” She explained, “The reason I want to go back to school isn’t because my friends do, it’s because I don’t want to be working a low paying job struggling to survive paycheck to paycheck each week.”

Sam described the personal growth he experienced during his year off of school after being academically dismissed. As he stated:

As of last year, I really wasn’t sure quite what I wanted to do with my life. But, after getting [academically] dismissed from school, it really hit me how badly I need to finish my educational career with a college degree.

After his academic dismissal, Sam returned home where he held various jobs, including working in a restaurant, landscaping, and bailing hay. These jobs made him realize that “you can’t find a decent job without an education [college degree], which I kinda, I guess took for granted before.” He was applying for desk positions, such as a mail clerk, and at restaurants, all of whom turned him away due to his lack of a college degree. He acknowledged that he had some misconceptions about the need of a college education. Sam explained:

I always just thought, you know, education was something that you really didn’t need after you got a high school diploma, but I was really wrong. When I went out and was putting my applications in and everybody was asking whether I graduated from college or not, it kinda just hit me that you definitely need to get a diploma [college degree].
Elizabeth wanted to earn her college degree and if she was going to finish, she acknowledged that she would have to enroll now. Her decision to apply for academic reinstatement was due to her aspirations to earn her nursing degree, possibly eventually pursuing a master’s degree in nursing in the future, and to work in “the case management part of nursing.” Elizabeth desired “to finish [her college education] because I’ve been unemployed for a whole year.”

Courtney mentioned her desire “to graduate college and, hopefully, with some sort of degree in communication or in English to become a teacher.” She did not verbalize a stipulation associated with her desire to earn a college degree or to graduate from college. Rather, Courtney viewed the possibility of earning her college education as her goal, not affiliated with a stipulation.

**Role of Person’s Perceived Self-Efficacy**

Most of the participants in this study demonstrated having high perceived self-efficacy, or the belief that they were capable of being successful. This belief or confidence influenced their decision to apply for academic reinstatement and to return to college. As described in the following paragraphs, the participants’ high perceived self-efficacy was attributed to varying factors.

Courtney described her enhanced maturity and her increased independence. She worked during her time away from school. She explained, “I needed to mature and grow in a way that helped me become more stable and more confident in myself.” Courtney added, “Since being dismissed I have had a lot of time to achieve self-discovery and I’ve learned things about myself that I never knew.” She discussed the healthy relationship
she now had with her parents as a result of living on her own and becoming completely financially independent from her parents.

Courtney worked to better prepare herself for potential success upon her academic reinstatement. She discussed the steps she took to address goal setting, study skills, time management, and organizational skills. Courtney stated she was better at managing her time. She had her priorities “straight,” choosing to place emphasis on her work responsibilities instead of her social life. From her perspective, she was in a place where she was ready for college. “I’m excited. I really am. I know this time I’m ready and I still don’t know what I wanna do. But, I know that being here and just getting my general classes out of the way, I’m ready.”

Brooke described her increased level of maturity and responsibility, and how this influenced her decision to apply for academic reinstatement. She assumed many more responsibilities as a result of moving out on her own. When asked to describe these additional responsibilities, Brooke talked about doing her own laundry, cooking for herself, cleaning up after herself, and going to work. She realized “that it’s not all fun and games anymore like it used to be.” Brooke felt the increased responsibility she assumed in her personal life would transition into her approach to her academics as well.

Brooke viewed her lack of a major and career path as a source of stress that impacted her focus on school previously. This newfound direction influenced her decision to apply for academic reinstatement. Now, she was focused on the hospitality management major with the intention of possibly taking over the family-owned restaurant and catering business in the future.
Scott’s belief in his ability to be successful upon academic reinstatement was conveyed through the adjustments he made personally. As Scott stated, “I’m just a lot different person than I was then. I’m more mature. I want this [to earn a college degree]. I’m a lot more responsible.” His lifestyle significantly changed since he attended college previously. He was 26 years old and married. He no longer drank alcohol. His social life consisted of spending time at home or with family and friends. He enjoyed watching football from the comfort of his couch and playing golf. Scott stated, “I do other things with my time instead of going out to bars and clubs and being a normal 19-, 20-, 21-year old boy.”

Sam described how his time away from school allowed him to reflect on his future aspirations. When he previously attended college, he was an exploratory major. However, at that time, his intention was to eventually become a business administration major. During his time away from school, he began to write more frequently as an outlet “to help me get my life more organized.” Sam further explained,

It [writing] has helped me cope with many problems I have faced over the past year as well as brought me a little bit more joy in my life to write about the good things that have happened as well.

Sam decided to further explore his passion for writing and pursue a journalism major, providing him a new direction when he applied for academic reinstatement. Sam felt that his newfound passion of writing and his decision to major in journalism gave “me the freedom to express all of those emotions that I can’t get out normally.” He believed in his
ability to be successful upon academic reinstatement due to the interest and excitement he had about his future academic path.

Amber equated her return to school as a means of taking control of her life, stating that she is ready “to begin my life how I want it to be from here on out” and to work hard “at what ever major I decide I want to pursue.” Amber’s resistance to the control of her parents initially influenced her to assume responsibility for her education after her academic reinstatement. As Amber stated during her first interview:

No one else can tell me what to do or has any say in what’s going to happen, but me. All that happened is [Moreland University] gave me the chance to do it [pursue her education] again, and I’m on a thin leash on how much I can get away with. So, it’s really all up to me to get myself off of that academic probation . . . I’m at that point where nobody else can decide what’s going to happen past this point, but me.

The issue of not being allowed to live on campus during her prior attendance at the institution was an issue that Amber addressed as well. She felt by returning to school, she would be able to reside on campus and eliminate the housing issue, which she felt resulted in her prior poor academic performance. Amber perceived this lifestyle change would have a positive influence on her performance after academic reinstatement. Absent from Amber’s reinstatement letter and her two interviews was accountability for the academic pitfalls she previously experienced. Rather, Amber stated, “Exposure to the other students and a campus lifestyle would help me balance my time and focus on my goals and help me achieve them.” However, it is evident from her prior statement that she
looked to others to rectify her weaknesses. From Amber’s perspective, living on campus, time management, and goal-setting needed to be addressed in order to be successful upon academic reinstatement.

Elizabeth was the only participant who demonstrated a low perceived self-efficacy. She still made the decision to apply for academic reinstatement even though she exhibited low perceived self-efficacy in comparison to the other participants. Elizabeth described her decision to apply for academic reinstatement almost as if it were on a whim. She conveyed a sense of disbelief as she reflected on being notified of her academic reinstatement. Elizabeth reflected:

So, this is the right time for me to go back and I only have, like, 20 some years of working to get under my belt as far as retirement anyway. So, why not try to come back to school and see what I can do? So, that’s what I did [applied for academic reinstatement]. I filled out the paper, I wrote my letter, and they [the College of Undergraduate Studies] called. I was out of town when they called and I was, like, “What?” Then, she [her daughter] was, like, “Mom, they didn’t call,” and I was, like, “Are you serious? Did they call?” And, she was, like, “Yeah.” And, I was, like, “Oh my goodness!” I can't believe that they actually called because some of the stuff that I put in my letter.

Elizabeth did not demonstrate an enhancement in her belief in herself and in her ability to be academically successful after her return to college. As described above, Elizabeth was still uncertain of the content of her letter.
Role of Person’s Self-Worth

For the majority of the participants, the decision to apply for academic reinstatement was a means to enhance their sense of self-worth, which was previously hindered by their previous poor academic performances. A fear of failure developed as a result of their prior academic dismissal. Their academic achievement (or lack thereof) influenced their level of self-worth. Although the phrases (“failing myself,” “prove to myself,” and “owe it to myself”) used to describe a student’s self-worth varied, the meaning was comparable among the participants. They did not want their previous academic failures to define them as students or as individuals. Academic reinstatement offered the potential of regaining what was lost when they were previously academically dismissed—the opportunities to attend college and to earn a college degree. These opportunities offered the possibility of enhancing some of the feelings, including pride, confidence, self-worth, that were tarnished as a result of their poor previous academic performance. The role of a person’s self-worth as a theme is described in the following paragraphs.

Courtney, Scott, and Brooke all cited a factor in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement was “to prove to myself” that they could continue their pursuit of a college education. Courtney attributed her decision to return to college after being academically dismissed to her readiness “to continue my education and to prove to myself that I can do this [continue her education] and anything that I set my mind to.” Courtney’s goal was to earn a college degree. She wanted to be a “success story” and
“just be able to tell people about how terrible I was and that I turned around.” She also wanted to return to college for herself. She stated:

I sorta feel like I owe this to myself. And, I kind of need to prove to myself that it doesn’t matter where the school is, I can do it. I love it here [at Moreland University]. So, I mean, this is my home. It’s hard to find another place that I’m really comfortable in.

Courtney confessed her fear of failure. In an effort to avoid the possibility of being academically dismissed a second time, it was important to Courtney to surround herself with the “right” people and to not get “involved with those people who have no motivation to succeed.”

Scott viewed his previous attendance as a failure, in turn, hindering his self-worth and becoming a source of motivation to return to college as a reinstated student. Scott elaborated:

Because when I fail at something, eventually, I’ll smack myself in the back of the head and I have to finish it. I failed here, basically, and now I have to prove to myself, and my wife, my family that I can go back.

Another component of this role of a person’s self-worth as a factor in Scott’s return was the fact that Scott’s mother had failed out of the same institution in the early ’80s and he wanted to prove that he was not like his mother. Scott felt that his mother’s previous academic failure in college contributed to the obstacles she encountered during her life. Like his mother, Scott had earned the status of an academically dismissed student. With
the comparison to his mother and his negative perspective of her, Scott’s level of self-worth diminished further. Scott explained:

It didn’t register to me then but now, when my mom tells me what she did wrong [in college], it registers now. And, then I see where my parents are at now [in their life] and it’s like, I don’t want that to happen to me. They’ve had a hard life. Scott elaborated, “I am afraid to fail, but that fear is gonna keep me from doing it [failing out of school again].” He further described his fear of receiving another academic dismissal letter in the future. Scott explained:

I’m so afraid of that [receiving a letter of academic dismissal] happening because I know this is my last chance here [at Moreland University], and I don’t want to screw it up. That’s the thing that makes me the most anxious and nervous about it because I don’t want to mess up. But, I’m not gonna let myself.

Brooke’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement was motivated by her desire “to prove to myself that I can do something that maybe once I’d failed at.” Brooke desired to earn a college degree because she felt she could have performed at a much higher level during her previous college attendance, which resulted in academic dismissal. Brooke reflected on learning of her previous academic dismissal, she stated:

My mom wasn’t happy with me, and it made me feel . . . like I was stupid because I . . . didn’t apply myself like I should have. And, I knew that I could have done better. And . . . it made me wanna come back and get a [college] degree and do something with my life. It just kinda like slapped me in the face.
She described her prior academic failure as a source of motivation, explaining that it “pushes me because I didn’t do as good the first time around [in college].” At the same time Brooke verbalized her fear of failing. Rather than focusing on her fear of performing poorly this semester, she chose to look at her return to college in a positive light. She stated:

I feel like it [returning to college] will make me feel like a better person, wanna come to school more, and focus on school more. Once I start, it will just, it’s like a confidence booster to know that I’m finally doing good. So, I really like this [returning to college].

Elizabeth decided to apply for academic reinstatement because “I owe it to myself and my family.” Elizabeth was concerned about her age as she questioned, “Do I have enough time [to finish this degree]?” Elizabeth wanted to go at a slower pace in pursuing her education upon academic reinstatement. The apprehension she experienced about her age and the length of time since her last enrollment in college was also a source of motivation for Elizabeth. She didn’t want to fall into the same pitfalls as she did previously by attempting to take on too much only to end up failing out of school. She explained, “I’m older and I know the obstacles that I made [encountered] previously. They got in my way previously and I know the things that I have to do to overcome them.” Elizabeth described her previous lack of focus in completing tasks, stating:

I’ve never been one to complete anything. So, now, I’m at the point now where I have to complete it. I think the only thing that I completed was childbirth. But,
right now, that’s where I’m at now. I always start something, but I never finish it.

And, that’s the one thing that I looked at when I was trying to get reinstated.

Amber’s perspective on her previous academic failure and the influence it had on her level of self-worth was slightly different than the other participants. She felt that this was her last chance at attending college and earning a college degree. She stated, “If I don’t do it [attend college and earn a college degree], then I’m just failing myself.” It was as though Amber was willing to consider the possibility of academic failure if she was not successful at the end of her first semester after being academically reinstated.

Sam was the only participant who did not mention failure or the need to prove himself to enhance his level of self-worth as a factor in his decision to apply for academic reinstatement. For Sam, he assumed responsibility for the mistakes he made during his previous academic attendance. In his journal reflection, he stated, “I screwed up in school and I am trying to turn that around and succeed in school.” Throughout his reinstatement letter and his two interviews, his conversations focused on his goals after academic reinstatement and within the classroom rather than the possibility of failure or the need to repair feelings associated with his prior academic dismissal.

**Research Question Two**

How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to improve their academic performance after academic reinstatement?

Four themes emerged from the data collected which addressed the second research question: students’ awareness of resources, students’ knowledge of strategies for
academic success, student notions of not being alone, and student perceptions of academic advising. Each theme is presented with supporting data to depict the emergence of that particular theme in the below paragraphs.

**Students’ Awareness of Resources**

At the conclusion of the mandatory half-day group session, all of the participants described their enhanced awareness of the resources available in assisting them to achieve academic success after reinstatement. However, an obstacle for some of the participants was utilizing the academic resources available to them. A student’s awareness of resources did not result in the utilization of these resources. All of the participants (Sam, Elizabeth, and Courtney) who were permitted to continue into the spring 2010 semester took advantage of on-campus resources, specifically the Academic Success Center. The other participants (Brooke, Amber, and Scott) who were not permitted to continue into the spring 2010 semester intended to take advantage of the resources across campus. However, for Brooke and Amber, placing their words into action proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. Scott did not complete his second interview to officially determine if he utilized any of the resources across campus. It is anticipated that Scott’s failing academic performance in his courses (many of the courses he stopped attending or never attended) mirrors his efforts in seeking assistance from the resources across campus. No documentation was obtained from any departments across campus that confirmed his utilization of their resources and services. Students’ awareness of resources as a theme is described in the below paragraphs.
In her journal reflection from the half-day group session, Courtney mentioned her intention of utilizing the Academic Success Center this semester for tutoring in psychology and mathematics. However, in reflecting on her experience during the half-day group session during her second interview, Courtney did not feel the promotion of the resources and services available through the Academic Success Center and the Counseling Center embedded in the panel discussion was beneficial. Even though she acknowledged experiencing difficulty “in learning how to study effectively” after her return to college, Courtney did not seek assistance from the Academic Success Center at the beginning of her semester returning to college. Courtney acknowledged, “Maybe I’m just stubborn. I didn’t think I would benefit from it [the Academic Success Center]. Actually, instead of going to the Academic Success Center, I went to friends who could help me.” However, Courtney made me aware that she had signed up for mathematics tutoring through the Academic Success Center during the week of our second interview because she “decided I need to go get tutoring so somebody can sit down and say, ‘Well, this is step one. This is step two.’” Courtney did not take advantage of any of the other services promoted during the half-day group session.

Sam’s perspective on the panel discussion was quite different than Courtney’s feelings. Sam felt the panel discussion was the most beneficial aspect of the half-day group session. He specifically cited the comments of the clinical psychologist from the Health Center and the academic program and student development coordinator from the College of Undergraduate Studies as noteworthy. Sam explained the panel members “showed us [the academically reinstated students] that it is possible for you to get back
into school and to do well and excel.” One aspect that stuck with Sam is the fact that two of the panel members experienced academic obstacles themselves during their undergraduate career. He found their stories to be inspirational and demonstrated that “it [succeeding upon academic reinstatement] can be done.”

When asked about the resources discussed during the half-day group session, Sam mentioned his utilization of the Academic Success Center. Sam sought tutoring assistance through the Academic Success Center for his history course. He had attended two tutoring sessions. Sam commented:

I started off not doing so hot in history [class], so I went to the Learning Center [Academic Success Center]. And, I actually got some help there. And, after that, I have seen an improvement, so I didn’t really see a need to go see the counselors at that point.

Elizabeth experienced a newfound confidence in her status as a reinstated student after she attended the half-day group session. She explained:

By being in the LEAP program, it let me recognize that there are services that I can obtain that’s [sic] on campus. There are people that I can go to to [sic] talk to. And, it let me see, it helped me as far as me being a good student.

Elizabeth liked learning about the services and resources available to her. She stated in her journal reflection during the LEAP half-day group session, “By me knowing the services, I plan to utilize them. I know I have more than enough resources that is (sic) here to assist me. That I really didn’t know before.” However, Elizabeth admitted she had not used all of them at this point in the semester. She explained, “The services that
they [staff members during the LEAP half-day group session] told us about I have taken advantage of.” She met with a tutor in the Academic Success Center for her mathematics course. She met with a peer mentor in the Academic Success Center to receive assistance with her sociology course. Elizabeth acknowledged:

It helps me out a lot. Sometimes, it’s kind of a pain because I gotta go [to tutoring and mentoring], just because I just have to get the kinks out of my being lazy. It’s something that I have to do, but it’s nice to know that I have that service [tutoring/mentoring service] and that I can use it and that it’s available for me to use. And, I do [use the tutoring/mentoring service].

Elizabeth utilized Psychological Services and met with a staff member. She described her experience in detail. Elizabeth stated:

I had went to that [Psychological Services] and talked with someone because I was going crazy. So, when I was talking with her [the staff member], she really helped me out as far as explaining different things. She was, like, “No, you’re not depressed. This could make you depressed, but no.” She told me if I feel like I needed help, she’d gear me toward the right direction. But, it was nice just to sit down and talk to somebody to let them know how I was feeling. So, that helped out a lot, too. That really did.

Brooke described how the various resources and services discussed during the half-day group session made her aware of the help that was available to students. She reflected, “I just see so much more that’s out there that I can go to to [sic] help me with my classes or if I’m having problems.” Brooke felt the half-day group session “put
everything into perspective” and exemplified “what I need to be doing” to succeed as an academically reinstated student.

Brooke said that she personally found the panel discussion of the resources and services and the conversation about time management beneficial. She stated, “I liked when the panel came in and they all talked and said the different places we could go for help.” Although she found the panel discussion of the resources and services helpful, she had not taken advantage of any of them during the semester. Brooke explained:

A lot of it [why I have not used any of the resources and services] is because I think I just go to school, do that, and then go home and study, or I mean work and stuff. I guess that I know that they’re there and where to do. I just never really did it. I don’t know if it was because I was nervous to go or what, but I just never did.

Amber had previously commented in her journal reflection completed at the conclusion of the half-day group session that she felt that “everything is going to help me in one way or another. It [the half-day group session] all was full of good information.” Amber even cited the panel discussion as the most beneficial aspect of the half-day group session, commenting, “They [the members of the staff panel] had a lot of good ideas and things to help us along the way and also a lot of programs to help us succeed.” In her journal reflection, when asked about her future utilization of resources across campus, Amber noted that she intended on “using as many [resources] as I possibly as I can [sic].”

However, during our second interview, in reflecting on her experience during the half-day group session, Amber felt that the information was “boring” and “things that I
already really knew about, so it was just kinda pointless in my mind.” When I asked Amber to expand on this statement, she indicated she was aware of the various resources, such as the Academic Success Center, Writing Center, and library, available to her on campus. Amber explained:

So, it’s just from the last time I was here and being from [the same city in which Moreland University resides], you tend to know what’s going on on-campus. And, having my friends’ parents, my mom’s friends who work on campus, it’s just, like, I already knew that everything was pretty much there and all the stuff that was here. And, it just seemed like I already know this. So, it just made it [the half-day group session] boring.

As our conversation progressed during our second interview, it was clear to me that Amber had not sought the assistance from any of the resources or services described during the half-day group session.

Finally, Scott mentioned in his journal reflection completed at the conclusion of the half-day group session that he intended on utilizing various resources across campus such as the Academic Success Center, the Career Services Center, and the Student Advising Center. He did not attend his second interview. Therefore, his utilization of resources is unknown. However, if his lack of attendance in his academics bears any reflection on his utilization of the resources across campus, it is assumed that Scott did not actively seek assistance from any departments across campus.
Students’ Knowledge of Strategies for Academic Success

At the conclusion of the mandatory half-day group session, all of the participants described their increased knowledge of strategies to promote academic success and their intention of implementing the strategies after their academic reinstatement. Some of the strategies discussed during the half-day group session were time management, goal setting, prioritization, and study skills. The level to which these strategies were implemented varied between the participants. Students’ knowledge of strategies for academic success as a theme is described in the below paragraphs.

Courtney said she personally found the strategies and discussion about time management beneficial during the half-day group session. She commented, “That really, really helped because I’m terrible at time management. But, I really learned a lot.” The LEAP program provided her with a focus on “how to stay on track and not fall behind, not get lost and wrapped up in other things.”

Sam stated that he felt the LEAP program positively influenced his academic performance this semester. He commented, “A lot of the things that I learned about from the LEAP program I took in and actually used. And, it helped me schedule my time and stay on track with school.” Sam’s ability to manage his time and to prioritize his responsibilities was guided by the conversation and activity regarding time management during the half-day group session. He used the weekly calendar to help manage his time. Sam found himself adding to the weekly calendar as the semester progressed, explaining:
I only had workout, eat, and go to class [on his original weekly calendar]. And, now, I have when I’m studying, when I have to go to the library, when I have all my sports and stuff like that to go to. So, it’s getting a lot deeper now.

Elizabeth found the time management discussion helpful in her return to college. She stated, “That’s [time management] the one [resource] I really use every day.” Her personal calendar was a source of comfort for her when she felt overwhelmed. It helped her to manage her time better.

Elizabeth tried to utilize goal setting strategies reviewed during the LEAP half-day group session “every day.” She regularly made lists of goals needing to be completed and outlined how her goals were going to be completed. Some examples she provided of goals she had set for herself were short-term goals, such as earning a ‘B’ on her next exam in her study strategies course, and long-term goals, such as getting into the nursing program. Elizabeth also mentioned that she utilized the study strategy techniques discussed during the LEAP half-day group session as well. She explained, “I learned how to study.” She described such techniques as reviewing and rewriting her notes from class on the same day and denoting main ideas in her textbook reading next to her class notes in her notebook.

Brooke found the time management and goal setting strategies helpful. She mentioned using the weekly calendar to manage her time more effectively, stating that she liked “doing the scheduling where I made the colorful schedule [weekly calendar] and [outlined] what it’s [her schedule is] going to be like, and plan my day.” She also mentioned implementing goal setting strategies she learned during the half-day group
session. Brooke worked hard this semester to complete assignments in advance of the deadline. She stated:

I want to be ahead of schedule, like, [by having] my papers written already, which, actually, I have two papers sitting at home that aren’t even due yet, but it’s written down and not typed up. So, yeah, I have set goals and I make sure I’m ahead of the game.

In her journal reflection completed at the conclusion of the half-day group session, Amber did not outline specific strategies that she planned to implement during her first semester returning to college. She explained, “I plan to change most of what I do so that I can better prepare my self [sic] for what is to come and so that I can make it to graduation day.” During her second interview, Amber reflected on the strategies discussed during the half-day group session. Amber discussed the goal setting strategies, which she stated that she used to a degree. She explained, “I mean, obviously, I have the goal to get a 2.0 because it will kill my mother if I get kicked out of school again, even though, personally, I think getting a 2.0 is stupid.”

When asked if she utilized any of the time management strategies discussed during the half-day group session, Amber dismissed the strategies, explaining,

It [keeping a weekly calendar] doesn’t really do anything for me, just because my workweek changes. And, it could change in the middle of the week if something comes up for somebody else at the end of the week, she’ll [her boss] move schedules.
Amber’s approach to managing her time was reflective of her priorities. She stated, “School’s obviously important. Doing homework’s important. But, at the same time, going to work is important.” As she further conversed about her schedule, it was evident that work was her primary focus.

In his journal reflection, Scott identified his intention of utilizing the “time management, goal setting, study skills” strategies discussed during the half-day group session. He felt these strategies would “help me devise a course of action and put it into play.” It is uncertain whether or not Scott utilized any of these strategies considering that he did not attend his second interview.

**Student Notions of Not Being Alone**

All of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott) stated the academic intervention program provided them with a sense of comfort in not being alone. However, what differed among the participants was the resulting behavior from knowing that others were in a comparable academic situation as a reinstated student. Student notions of not being alone as a theme is described in the below paragraphs.

The feeling of finding comfort in knowing other reinstated students were in a comparable situation emerged in experiences of Elizabeth, Scott, and Brooke. In her written reflection, Elizabeth described walking into the LEAP half-day group session as “not intimidating knowing everyone has a story that got them [here].” In the journal reflection completed at the completion of the half-day group session, Scott described the comfort he felt in participating in the academic intervention program. He stated, “It made [me] more comfortable. I wasn’t embarrassed of failing out of school.” Brooke discussed
the comfort she felt knowing that she was not the only student who had been academically dismissed and who was now aspiring to succeed upon academic reinstatement. Her comfort was a result of knowing that “everyone else there [at the half-day group session] was in the same position and we could relate to each other.”

Amber liked that she was surrounded by other students who were in the same academic situation as she was and that “you’re not the only person that screwed up.” However, she was very quick to add that she did not like the group discussions included in the LEAP program. Amber stated:

I would say for some people, it is better for them to sit down and do little activities and listen to people talk . . . I’m not very, I wanna say, group oriented when it comes to things. I like doing things my own way and on my own. So, the fact that it was, like, “Hey, do this with a group of people who you don’t even know” is kinda just like, all right, cool, not going to do me any good. I’m not a big people person.

Amber stressed her desire to address her previous academic failures and her return to college in isolation from the assistance or guidance of others. Amber felt as though the information conveyed during the half-day group session was like having someone “shove stuff down your throat.” She explained, “I’m kinda the type of person that likes to do stuff on my own and just do stuff my own way rather than being told how to do things.”

As Courtney reflected on attending the mandatory half-day group session, she described her apprehension of other students hearing her story of academic failure.
However, she quickly learned that her story was quite similar to many of her fellow students attending the half-day group session. She stated:

I mean, at first, I was like, “Oh, god. People are gonna hear about what I did and they’re gonna be like, ‘Wow.’” And, I was the only one that had gone about it [her prior academic experience] the way that I did, but I wasn’t. There were plenty of people who spent weeks partying and not going to class. And, it was a good feeling just to know that they were in the same situation I was in.

Courtney felt the LEAP program gave her “an extra boost.” She was encouraged by the realization that she was not alone in this journey of academic reinstatement. She explained:

It [the LEAP program] gave me the extra push of we’re all here to help you. You’re not in this alone, which is nice to know that it’s not just me and I have to deal with it. It was very positive. I mean, I learned a lot through it [the LEAP program].

Prior to attending the half-day group session, Sam felt that it was going to be “a waste of time.” Sam explained:

I really didn’t understand what it [the mandatory half-day group session] was all about. And once I got there and realized that it actually helped you progress or I guess get back into the way of school after being out of it [school]. For me, it was a year [out of school]. But, other people, I guess, had been gone for quite a few years, so I’m sure that helped them as much as it helped me to just get back into
the process of doing schoolwork and getting a time schedule down and everything like that.

Sam was “kinda iffy about it [the academic intervention program]” as he entered the room of the mandatory half-day group session. Sam’s perspective changed when he walked into the room and realized that he was surrounded by other students in the experiencing comparable academic obstacles as he had. Sam reflected on this moment, stating:

But, when I sat down and realized that so many other people also went through the same things that I went through, and that they were working hard to get back to where I was, I didn’t feel so outcast, I guess you could say. And so, I think that helped give me a lot more confidence coming back into school.

For Courtney and Sam, who both actually met the minimum requirement of a 2.0 term GPA at the end of fall 2009, the theme of not being alone emerged from their experiences, compared to Amber, Elizabeth, Brooke, and Scott, who solely described the comfort they felt in knowing that other reinstated students could relate to their current academic position. However, for both of these participants (Courtney and Sam), in addition to feeling comfort in knowing that other students were in the same academic position as they were, Courtney and Sam described the resultant feelings that influenced their academic success after reinstatement. Courtney developed motivation (“an extra boost” and “an extra push”) to prevail in her academic endeavors after reinstatement. The academic intervention program instilled “more confidence” in Sam’s academics after reinstatement.
Student Perceptions of Academic Advising

The frequency of meeting with their individual assigned academic advisor varied among the participants. The type of academic advising relationship also differed among participants as well. Student perceptions of academic advising as a theme is described in the below paragraphs.

Elizabeth talked very highly of her relationship with her academic advisor, Donna, who is located in the Student Advising Center. She estimated that she met with Donna four times for scheduled advising appointments, but also communicated with her during walk-in appointments and via e-mail regularly. Elizabeth explained:

By her [Donna] just being there to listen and to help me figure out what’s going on and asking me questions about my courses and my instructors. And, that, it helped me out a lot, knowing that I can go to her about a situation, either with my classes or my instructor, or just me in general as far as with my grades, to get me to the right direction, to get me to achieve my GPA and to get me out of warning [academic probation].

Donna provided advice and guidance to Elizabeth. Donna recommended resources to Elizabeth when she encountered obstacles during her semester after academic reinstatement. She was a constant presence in Elizabeth’s academic endeavors in the semester after reinstatement. Elizabeth explained:

I wouldn’t have known what [resources] was out there. I know I can go to my advisor and all that, but the tutoring, like before, I knew it was there. I just didn’t wanna use it [tutoring]. But, knowing that somebody [Donna, her academic
advisor] keep [sic] harping, if I go to my advisory [academic advisor] and they see my grades, you know, if [Donna] see [sic] my grades, [she would] be like, “Well, have you used the Academic Success Center? Have you talked to such and such?”

Courtney met with her academic advisor once during the semester after her academic reinstatement. When asked the reason for her academic advising appointment, Courtney stated it was “to schedule my [current] classes and talk about classes [for spring 2010].” However, Courtney saw her academic advisor much more frequently than the one scheduled academic advising appointment she had during the semester after her academic reinstatement. Courtney’s academic advisor was enrolled in one of Courtney’s current courses. As Courtney described, “But, actually, my advisor is in one of my classes, so we kinda have the opportunity to chat before and after class.” Courtney felt that these additional interactions were beneficial to her.

By the occurrence of his second interview, Sam had met with his academic advisor twice during his semester after academic reinstatement. His first meeting was to switch a course during the first week of the semester. His second advising appointment occurred on Monday, November 9, 2009. Sam met with his academic advisor to discuss registering for courses for the spring 2010 semester. Sam was aware that he was encouraged to have three academic advising appointments during the semester after reinstatement. Sam stated:

I was, like, “I think I was supposed to go to the advisor three times by now, but I’ve only been there once” and that was up until the day that I went on Monday . . . I know I didn’t actually live up to that [attending three academic advising
appointments], but I wanted to. So, I made an effort to at least get two [academic advising appointments].

Brooke met with her academic advisor once during her semester after academic reinstatement. In Brooke’s words, “we talked about how I’m doing right now and the classes I want to get into next semester (spring 2010).” As she described during her second interview, Brooke planned to follow up with her academic advisor to ask for help in scheduling her classes for spring 2010 “because I’m having problems on the computer.”

Amber did not meet with any academic advisors during the term to date. Amber did acknowledge that she was e-mailed by an academic advisor and had responded to the e-mail. Amber was concerned about registering for courses for the following spring semester “before my mom freaks out on me.” She stated that the academic advisor mentioned scheduling an appointment to check in with her and discussing classes for the following semester. However, the academic advisor “never sent anything back about doing anything with this [scheduling an appointment].” Therefore, she had not met with an academic advisor at the time of her second interview.

Scott did not attend his second interview. However, by accessing the academic advising scheduling database utilized by the Student Advising Center, it was confirmed that Scott did not schedule an academic advising appointment during the semester after his reinstatement. Further, Scott did not visit the Student Advising Center on a walk-in basis.
As described in the above paragraphs, Amber and Scott, both of whom did not meet with an academic advisor during the semester after their academic reinstatement, earned the lowest term GPAs (0.50 and 0.00, respectively) of all participants in this study. The frequency of interactions with an academic advisor varied among the remaining participants (Elizabeth, Courtney, Sam, and Brooke). However, the latter mentioned students placed some level of value on academic advising, which was supported by their meetings with their assigned academic advisors and their comments made by the participants (Elizabeth, Courtney, Sam, and Brooke) regarding their academic advising experiences during the semester after their academic reinstatement.

Summary

Chapter 5 answered the two research questions regarding why previously academically dismissed students decided to apply for academic reinstatement and how their participation in the LEAP program assisted them in improving their academic performance after academic reinstatement. Chapter 6 discusses the findings of this study in relation to the literature. I provide insight into the implications for the academically reinstated student population and higher education administrators, academic advisors, and academic success coaches. Finally, I present recommendations for future research.
A continued concern in higher education is the level of preparation and readiness
of entering students. The deficiencies in basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics;
McCabe, 2000), lack of academic preparation (McCabe, 2000), and continued enrollment
in remedial courses (Adelman, 2004) can have a detrimental impact on students’ ability to
academically succeed in higher education. Students could experience academic failure,
resulting in academic probation, suspension, or dismissal. Academic under preparedness
continues to be examined by various entities, including state legislative bodies (Ohio
Legislative Service Commission, 2006; Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2011),
the United States Department of Education (2010), K-12 education (National Governors
Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012), and
post-secondary institutions. The at-risk probationary student population encompasses
students on academic probation, dismissed students, suspended students, and
academically reinstated students. The focus of more of the research was placed on the
population of at-risk students labeled as probationary students compared to that of the
reinstated student population. What lacked in the prior research were studies specifically
focused on the needs and experiences of previously academically dismissed students.

This study explored the needs and experience of reinstated students participating
in an academic intervention program. The purpose of this study was to identify the
factors that influenced the decision to apply for reinstatement of previously academically
dismissed students and to examine how participation in an academic intervention program assists academically reinstated students to succeed upon reinstatement. Six academically reinstated students in the Learning to Establish Academic Priorities (LEAP) program at a large, public, mid-western, four-year institution participated in this study. I collected data for this study by conducting individual qualitative face-to-face interviews with each participant and by analyzing documents, including reinstatement applications, reinstatement letters, and journal reflections. Archival records, such as academic transcripts, were also analyzed.

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings of this study as it relates to the literature is provided. Implications of the findings of this study for academically reinstated students, higher education administrators, academic advisors, and academic success coaches are addressed. Limitations of the current study are shared. Finally, recommendations for future research are outlined.

**Discussion and Implications**

The purpose of this naturalistic case study was to identify the factors that influenced the decision to apply for reinstatement of previously academically dismissed students and to examine how participation in an academic intervention program assists academically reinstated students to succeed upon reinstatement. There were two central research questions that guided this study:

1. What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed?
2. How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to improve their academic performance after academic reinstatement?

**Research Question One**

*What factors influence the decision of students to apply for academic reinstatement after being academically dismissed?*

Six themes emerged from the data collected which addressed the first research question: role of family, role of peers, role of a second chance opportunity, role of stipulations associated with the completion of a college degree, role of person’s perceived self-efficacy, and role of a person’s self-worth.

**Role of family.** All of the previously dismissed students participating in this research study attributed their decision to apply for academic reinstatement to one or more family members. The manner in which the family member(s) influenced their individual decisions to apply for academic reinstatement varied among participants. For Scott, Courtney, Brooke, and Elizabeth, one or more family members were a source of motivation for them in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement and in their pursuit of returning to college. Many of the participants (Sam, Courtney, Scott, and Brooke) referred to the support they received from their family, which influenced their decision to apply for reinstatement. Participants also referred to family as a source of encouragement (Courtney) and inspiration (Scott).

For two of the participants (Amber and Scott), a negative connotation was associated with the role of family in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement.
For Amber, although her parents attempted to encourage her to return to college, she did not apply for academic reinstatement until she wanted to return. Scott felt his mother and stepfather exemplified the results of a lack of hard work. Scott wanted to succeed after academic reinstatement in an effort not to follow in the footsteps of his mother, who had failed out of college herself.

Although previously conducted research did not address the role of family in the decision-making process to apply for academic reinstatement, family was included as a barrier to academic success in the description of at-risk students. Santa Rita and Scranton (2001) classified students who encounter non-academic barriers to success, including family obligations, as one of the five categories of at-risk students. In describing at-risk students, Roueche and Roueche (1993) mentioned the role of family, stating:

Students who are not only underprepared for college, but who are also working 30 or more hours per week, who have little if any support from key family members, who are first-generation college attenders, who have what some have described as “failure expectations,” and who have little academic success as they begin their postsecondary experience. (p. 1)

With the exception of Amber, all of the participants (Brooke, Scott, Courtney, Elizabeth, and Sam) in this study could identify one or more family members who were a positive influence on their decision to apply for academic reinstatement. They had a positive perspective of their families, which exemplified the results of a study conducted by Fish et al. (1989), in which probationary students had a more positive perspective of their families than students who had never been on academic probation during their collegiate
career. Scott did not have a positive perspective of his mother or stepfather. Rather, his wife, his mother-in-law, and his father-in-law were positive influences on his decision to apply for reinstatement return to college and he conveyed a positive perspective of them.

Trombley (2000) found probationary students with a greater number of children within their households encountered increased obstacles that potentially hamper their academic performance in the classroom compared to students in good standing. In the case of Elizabeth, her children were a source of motivation to return to college. At the same time, she later discussed the role of mother and provider as a hindrance to her academic performance after being reinstated. Elizabeth was not alone in her struggle to find balance between family obligations and her academic endeavors as evidenced in the study conducted by Trombley. According to Trombley, “Obligations and responsibility to one’s family often takes precedence over schoolwork, not to mention the financial burdens associated with childcare, which could lead to attendance problems” (p. 247). Further research is warranted to explore the role of family on the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students in addition to their academic performance after returning to college.

**Role of peers.** Most of the participants (Amber, Courtney, Brooke, and Sam) referred to the influence of peers in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement. For these participants, a best friend (Amber), boyfriend (Courtney), cousin (Brooke), or old friends (Sam) provided a source of motivation to return to college. Peers were a source of motivation and encouragement for Amber, Courtney, and Brooke. The role of peers in Sam’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement was associated more with
returning to an environment in the presence of old friends and the possibility of meeting new people while pursuing his college education.

Elizabeth and Scott, who were the two oldest participants in the study (age 40 and 26, respectively), did not identify the role of peers as a factor influencing their decision to apply for academic reinstatement. If prompted with a specific question about the role of their peers in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement, Elizabeth and Scott might have revealed a peer who encouraged or motivated them to return to school. However, in the data collected, the role of peers was not a contributing factor in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement.

The role of peers was discussed as a source of encouragement and motivation as part of various intervention programs for at-risk students (Foreman et al., 1990; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lucas & Hunt, 2002). This support from peers occurred in various methods, such as group interaction support with peers (Kamphoff et al., 2007), peer advising (Lucas & Hunt, 2002), and peer tutoring (Foreman et al., 1990). However, the role of peers as a factor influencing the decision of previously academically dismissed students to apply for reinstatement has not been explored previously.

**Role of a second chance opportunity.** The perceived significance of academic reinstatement on the lives of the participants was consistently articulated throughout the data collected. Academic reinstatement offered participants the possibility of job or career-related opportunities post-graduation or the potential for increased opportunities (money, stable employment) in the future. Although varying terms were used, such as
“second chance,” “last chance,” “opportunity,” “new beginnings,” and “wake-up call,” all participants shared a comparable perspective regarding their academic reinstatement.

All of the participants in this study associated the “second chance” provided as a result of their academic reinstatement with the future goal of completing their college degree. In the previous literature, future goals have been referred to as “instrumental goals” (Malka & Covington, 2005), “distal goals” (Bandura & Schunk, 1981) and “life goals” (Kasser & Ryan, 2001). Currently, there is not a universally accepted definition of a future goal. However, Miller and Brickman (2004) characterized a future goal as “future-oriented in that successful performance on the current task does not, in itself, produce the desired consequence” (p. 14). Markus and Ruvolo (1989) referred to a future goal as the “possible self in which one is different from the now self and in which one realizes the goal” (p. 211). Markus and Ruvolo expanded on the need to fully embrace the pursuit of the possible self in one’s behavior, stating:

A goal will have an impact on behavior to the extent that an individual can personalize it by building a bridge of self-representations between one’s current state and one’s desired or hoped-for state. The critical determinant of whether a given goal will guide and sustain instrumental action is thus the ability to create and maintain the possible selves that allow one to appropriate a desired end state and to make it one’s own. (pp. 211-212)

Proximal goals “provide immediate incentives and guides for performance” (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). As mentioned by Miller and Brickman (2004):
We should note that merely adopting a valued future goal, in itself, does not lead to the development of a system of proximal goals. Rather, the initial commitment to obtaining valued future goals sets the stage for the process of proximal goal development. (p. 15)

For the participants in this study, they felt that academic reinstatement was their gateway to the future. Brooke made a connection between “the chance of [academic] reinstatement” and the responsibility that was required on her part (“that I needed to take college more seriously”) in order to be successful after academic reinstatement. Brooke also used the phrase “wake-up call” to describe her experience during the mandatory half-day group session of the LEAP program, once again alluding to a connection between the “chance of [academic] reinstatement” and action required on her part. Sam acknowledged that the “opportunity for me to come back to [Moreland University]” would require him to “work hard,” but he did not make any further connection between this “second chance” and action required on his part as an academically reinstated student. Regardless of the obstacles and academic failures previously encountered, academic reinstatement was their opportunity to pursue their future goal of completing a college degree. However, as Miller and Brickman (2004) concluded, persons committing to the achievement of future goals do not automatically develop proximal goals. The participants would have benefitted by extending beyond the aforementioned future goal and outlining the specific proximal goals that would act as stepping stones in the achievement of their goal of completing their college degree.
Nuttin (1984) further stressed the importance of addressing minor (proximal) goals daily in the pursuit of a major (future) goal (p. 152). Dynamic goal setting, in which specific proximal goals are outlined in an effort to achieve a future goal, adds a level of reality (p. 155). Nuttin explained, “Fantasy substitutes itself for reality level behavior and confines the person to empty dreams, while dynamic goal setting is a preparatory step within an efficient behavioral process” (p. 155). Nuttin emphasized the need to develop a behavioral project for goal setting, in which one creates a behavioral plan in “the pursuit of a specific [future] goal by means of a concrete action” based on a “focused need” (p. 157). The participants tended to define this “second chance” in terms of the opportunity to pursue the completion of their college degree rather than addressing the personal growth and learning that occurred from their prior dismal academic experiences. Additional reflection on the factors associated with their dismal prior academic performance and goal planning were warranted to academically succeed given this second chance opportunity.

The participants did not outline the proximal goals that would provide the stepping stones in the achievement of their future goal to complete their college degree in the wake of this second chance opportunity. Unfortunately, without the presence of the proximal goals to support the future goal of completing their college degree, the role of a second chance opportunity as a theme resonates more as a dream or a fantasy rather than an attainable reality.

**Role of stipulations associated with the completion of a college degree.** All participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott) viewed academic
reinstatement as an avenue to obtain a college degree. For all of the participants, the possibility of obtaining a college degree was an influence in returning to college after previously being academically dismissed. Each of the participants described this desire to obtain a college degree in their own terms, such as to “graduate, get a [college] degree, and start my life in the real world” (Amber), “to graduate and have a [college] degree” (Brooke), “to graduate from college” (Courtney), “to get my nursing degree” (Elizabeth), “to get a diploma [college degree]” (Sam), and “to receive my degree in nursing and use my knowledge to help others” (Scott).

With the exception of Courtney, all of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott) perceived the attainment of a college degree as a stipulation to gain access to an alternate goal for which they felt they would be entitled as a college graduate. Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) stated, “They [extrinsically motivated behaviors] are performed not out of interest but because they are believed to be instrumental to some separable consequence” (p. 328). Kasser and Ryan (1996) expanded on this idea, commenting, “Further, they [extrinsic goals] are a means to some other end” (p. 280). In this study, the stipulation associated with the completion of a college degree would be termed as external regulation in which “the locus of initiation is external to the person” (Deci et al., 1991, p. 329). Deci et al. further explained, “The behavior is performed because of an external contingency, and these contingencies are considered the loci of initiation and regulation” (p. 329).

The motivation behind their decision to apply for academic reinstatement varied among Amber, Brooke, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott. They perceived graduation from
college as a stipulation to the achievement of an alternate goal. Amber attributed her motivation to complete her college degree to the importance of a college degree within U.S. society. “You can’t really do anything these days without a college degree.” Although she was uncertain of her future career ambitions, Amber felt that a college degree would provide access in achieving her future goals.

Elizabeth and Scott viewed the attainment of a college degree as a means to secure their desired jobs (as a nurse and a nurse or doctor, respectively). Scott equated his prior experience in the military and his acquired skills as a medic to that of a nurse or a doctor. As Scott mentioned, “Because, in the military, what I went to school for doesn’t transfer to a career out here. Because, what I did, you have to have a degree to do. So, for me to do what I truly wanna do, I have to go to school.” The fact that Scott assumed a role and acquired skills that he equated to a nurse or doctor during his prior military experience contributed to his perception of a college degree as a rite of passage en route to securing his ultimate position as a nurse or a doctor.

Brooke and Sam desired to earn a college degree in order to obtain what they referred to as a “good job” and a “decent job,” respectively. Brooke further described her decision to return to college, stating, it “isn’t because my friends do, it’s because I don’t want to be working a low paying job struggling to survive paycheck to paycheck each week.” After working in various positions after his academic dismissal, Sam determined “you can’t find a decent job without an education [college degree], which I kinda, I guess took for granted before.”
Based on prior research (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), the external goal of completing their college degree as a stipulation to pursue an alternate endeavor does not have the likelihood of yielding the desired results for the participants. Kasser and Ryan suggested that extrinsic goals may be more difficult to achieve, resulting in increased stress. They added that the potential resultant success from extrinsic goals could be not as personally rewarding compared to success associated with intrinsic goals. As encouraged by Eppler and Harju (1997), it is necessary for students to become more actively engaged and fully invested in the learning goal process, which will help to enhance intrinsic motivation, rather than solely focusing on the target outcomes associated with extrinsic motivation.

With respect to the findings of this study, it is imperative for academically reinstated students to address the factors motivating them to return to college. They need to eliminate the associated stipulations and contingencies of their return to college in an effort not to distort their focus and not to hamper their potential academic success after returning to college. Without the presence of stipulations or contingencies, academically reinstated students need to identify the factors motivating their return to college.

**Role of Person’s Perceived Self-Efficacy**

Data collected and analyzed from the individual qualitative face-to-face interviews and the documents, including reinstatement applications, reinstatement letters, and journal reflections, indicated most of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Sam, and Scott) in this study demonstrated having high perceived self-efficacy, or the belief that they were capable of being successful. This high perceived self-efficacy influenced their decision to apply for academic reinstatement and to return to college.
The participants’ (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Scott, and Sam) high perceived self-efficacy was attributed to varying factors. An enhanced level of maturity (Brooke, Courtney, and Scott), an increased state of independence (Courtney), and a strengthened sense of responsibility (Amber, Brooke, and Scott) were all identified. Brooke and Sam cited their newfound direction toward their respective major or intended career as a source of excitement and motivation to apply for academic reinstatement. Scott and Amber felt the individual lifestyle changes that they made promoted academic success after their return to college. Specifically, Scott felt that age, marriage, and the activities that now comprised his social life fostered an environment that promoted success after academic reinstatement. Amber attributed her intention to live on campus as a factor that she felt would positively influence her academic performance after returning to college. Amber also discussed in detail how her return to college was an avenue to take control of her life in order to free herself from the control of her parents.

Elizabeth was the only participant who demonstrated a low perceived self-efficacy. In lieu of the low perceived self-efficacy that she exhibited in comparison to the other participants, Elizabeth still made the decision to apply for academic reinstatement, which she described as if the decision were made on a whim. She conveyed a sense of disbelief as she reflected on being notified of her academic reinstatement. Elizabeth did not demonstrate an enhancement in her belief in herself and in her ability to be academically successful after her return to college.

Bandura (1997) defined perceived self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3).
Self-efficacy is exemplified through the confidence an individual has in his or her capability to successfully persevere in completing an endeavor (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009). Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) stated, “Perceived self-efficacy influences the level of goal challenge people set for themselves, the amount of effort they mobilize, and their persistence in the face of difficulties” (p. 664).

There are three dimensions of self-efficacy: level, generality, and strength (Bandura, 1997). Level refers to “the range of perceived capability for a given person is measured against levels of task demands that represent varying degrees of challenge or impediment to successful performance” (Bandura, 1997, p. 42). Generality refers to the “degree of similarity of activities, the modalities in which capabilities are expressed (behavioral, cognitive, affective), qualitative features of situations, and the characteristics of the persons toward whom the behavior is directed” (p. 43). Strength refers to the belief in one’s ability to persevere in the presence of obstacles encountered (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1997) addressed the significance of self-efficacy on an individual’s course of action, explaining:

People’s beliefs in their efficacy have diverse effects. Such beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize. (p. 3)
There are converging perspectives in the previous research regarding high perceived self-efficacy in relation to subsequent performance. On one hand, previous research has found persons with high perceived self-efficacy are committed to achieving challenging goals, regard difficult tasks as challenges rather than obstacles, address the possibility of failure with increased effort, and are assured in the presence of a challenging situation (Bandura, 1993). Schunk (1989) added, “One’s own performances offer quite reliable guides for assessing self-efficacy. In general, successes raise efficacy and failures lower it, although once a strong sense of efficacy is developed an occasional failure will not have much impact” (p. 174).

On the other hand, divergent findings have argued that persons with high perceived self-efficacy can exude over confidence, which negatively impacts future performance (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002). In turn, high perceived self-efficacy can reduce motivation and the allocation of resources, including time and effort, toward the achievement of a goal (Vancouver, More, & Yoder, 2008). Bandura (2012) challenged the research design of this study (and many other studies that generated divergent findings), going as far as to characterize the findings of Vancouver and Kendall (2006) as “misleading” (p. 25).

The current research study extends the literature on perceived self-efficacy after a dismal academic performance (failure). Most of the participants in the current study (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Scott, and Sam) demonstrated a high perceived self-efficacy in spite of their prior dismal academic performance, which resulted in their previous academic dismissal. The participants who demonstrated a high perceived self-efficacy in
this study still harbored an enhanced confidence in their potential to succeed even after their prior dismal academic performance and subsequent academic dismissal. These participants also possessed many of the characteristics associated with persons who demonstrate high perceived self-efficacy. They were both confident and eager to return to college after being academically dismissed as a result of their previous dismal academic performance. These participants intended to exemplify a commitment and effort toward their academic endeavors after returning to college. However, the level of commitment and effort implemented throughout the semester varied among participants. Their resultant academic performance varied as well.

The participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Scott, and Sam) in this study who demonstrated high perceived self-efficacy after being academically dismissed could attribute their level of perceived self-efficacy to the manner and the breadth to which they reflected on their prior dismal academic performance. Bandura (2012) acknowledged:

The extent to which people will alter their perceived efficacy through performance experiences depends upon, among other factors, their preconceptions of their capabilities, the perceived difficulty of the tasks, the amount of effort they expend, the amount of external aid they receive, the circumstances under which they perform, the temporal pattern of their successes and failures, and the way these enactive experiences are cognitively organized and restricted in memory. (p. 81)

Bandura (2012) added, “Good intentions will contribute little if students cannot get themselves to do their academic work, especially in the face of stressors, difficulties, and a host of competing attractions” (p. 26). Schunk (1989) stated, “High self-efficacy
will not produce competent performances when requisite skills are lacking” (p. 175). In addition to adequate skills, factors, such as outcome expectations and perceived value, can influence the subsequent behavior and resultant performance of persons demonstrating high self-efficacy (Schunk, 1989). It is imperative to further examine factors, such as effort, adequate skills, outcome expectations, and perceived value, in relation to a student who demonstrates high perceived self-efficacy after being academic dismissal as a result of a previous dismal academic performance.

**Role of a Person’s Self-Worth**

Data collected and analyzed from the individual qualitative face-to-face interviews and the documents, including reinstatement applications, reinstatement letters, and journal reflections, indicated the decision to apply for academic reinstatement for most of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, and Scott) in this study was a means to enhance their sense of self-worth, which was previously hindered by their previous dismal academic performances. For most of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, and Scott), a fear of failure developed as a result of their prior academic dismissal. Their academic achievement (or lack thereof) influenced their level of self-worth. Although the phrases (“failing myself,” “prove to myself,” and “owe it to myself”) used to describe a student’s self-worth varied, the meaning was comparable among the participants. They did not want their previous academic failures to define them as students or as individuals.

Bandura (1997) differentiated between the previous theme of perceived self-efficacy and the current theme of self-worth, stating, “Perceived self-efficacy is
concerned with judgments of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgments of self-worth” (p. 11). Academic reinstatement offered the potential of regaining what was lost when they were previously academically dismissed—the opportunities to attend college and to earn a college degree. These opportunities offered the possibility of enhancing some of the feelings, including pride, confidence, self-worth, that were tarnished as a result of their poor previous academic performance.

Courtney, Scott, and Brooke all cited the objective “to prove to myself” that they could continue their pursuit of a college education as a factor in their decision to apply for academic reinstatement. Courtney attributed her decision to return to college after being academically dismissed to her readiness “to continue my education and to prove to myself that I can do this [continue her education] and anything that I set my mind to.” She wanted to be a “success story” and “just be able to tell people about how terrible I was and that I turned around.” Scott’s level of self-worth diminished after he was academically dismissed. However, his desire to return to college would address his level of self-worth, as he elaborated:

Because when I fail at something, eventually, I’ll smack myself in the back of the head and I have to finish it. I failed here, basically, and now I have to prove to myself, and my wife, my family that I can go back.

Brooke’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement was motivated by her desire “to prove to myself that I can do something that maybe once I’d failed at.”

Courtney, Scott, and Brooke attempted to return to college and to pursue their academic endeavors in an effort to enhance self-worth by “proving to myself” that they could
overcome a prior dismal academic performance and succeed after academic reinstatement. Elizabeth’s decision to apply for academic reinstatement and to return to college was motivated by the fact that she felt that “I owe it to myself and my family.” Amber used the phrase “failing myself” to describe how possible future failure in her academics after academic reinstatement would impact her personally, and, in turn, her level of self-worth.

As evidenced in the previous paragraphs, many of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, and Scott) in this study ascribed their academic achievement and performance (grades) after academic reinstatement to their level of self-worth. As stated by Covington (2000), regardless whether students attribute their goals to learning or performance (grades):

In effect, in our society individuals are widely considered to be only as worthy as their ability to achieve. For these reasons, the kinds of grades students achieve are the unmistakable measure by which many, if not most, youngsters judge their worth as students. (p. 181)

There is an established body of literature (Covington, 1984, 2000; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Deci et al., 1991; Niiya, Crocker, & Bartmess, 2004) addressing students who ascribe their self-worth to their academics. Students who attributed their self-worth to their academics were more prone to academic and financial problems (Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003), were less intrinsically motivated (Deci et al., 1991), and were more likely to have lower self-esteem and experience depression (Niiya et al., 2004). Crocker and Luhtanen (2003) stated:
The results of this study indicate that students experience stress when their self-worth depends on their academic performance; time becomes scarce, perhaps because there is always more academic work to do; professors and teaching assistants become sources of conflict, perhaps because they are viewed as obstacles to good grades rather than allies or resources; intrinsic interest is undermined; and regardless of the reality of one’s grades, one’s performance in school is less satisfying. (p. 708)

Participants (Courtney, Scott, Brooke, Elizabeth, and Amber) in this study verbalized a fear of failure as a result of their prior academic dismissal. Scott viewed his previous attendance as a failure, which, in turn, hindered his self-worth and became a source of motivation to return to college as a reinstated student. For Scott, a component of this theme of self-worth was his desire not to follow the same academic and life path of his mother, who was previously academically dismissed from the same institution. Scott regarded his mother’s prior academic failure from college as a contributing factor to the obstacles she encountered during her life. He attempted to transition his fear of failure to a source of motivation, stating, “I am afraid to fail, but that fear is gonna keep me from doing it [failing out of school again].”

Brooke described her prior academic failure as a source of motivation, explaining that it “pushes me because I didn’t do as good the first time around [in college].” At the same time Brooke verbalized her fear of failing. Rather than focusing on her fear of performing poorly this semester, she chose to look at her return to college in a positive light. She stated:
I feel like it [returning to college] will make me feel like a better person, wanna come to school more, and focus on school more. Once I start, it will just, it’s like a confidence booster to know that I’m finally doing good. So, I really like this [returning to college].

Elizabeth referred to her fear of failure from a perspective of her awareness of the obstacles that she would have to overcome in order to succeed academically after returning to college. Compared to the other participants in this study, Amber was willing to consider the possibility of academic failure if she was not successful at the end of her first semester after being academically reinstated. It was as though Amber was not as invested in her academics from the beginning of this journey to return to college as the other participants in this study.

Sam was the only participant who did not mention failure or the need to prove himself in order to enhance his level of self-worth as a factor in his decision to apply for academic reinstatement. Sam both identified and assumed responsibility for the mistakes he made during his previous academic attendance. In his journal reflection, he stated, “I screwed up in school and I am trying to turn that around and succeed in school.” Sam focused on his goals after academic reinstatement and within the classroom rather than the possibility of failure or the need to repair feelings associated with his prior academic dismissal. Sam was also one of the participants in this study who achieved a 2.0 semester GPA after academic reinstatement.

Although existing literature (Covington, 1984, 2000; Thompson, Davidson, & Barber, 1995) currently addresses failure-avoiding strategies related to maintaining or
enhancing self-worth, limited research exists on the self-worth of college students following academic failure. Park, Crocker, and Kiefer (2007) examined level of self-esteem (high or low) as it relates to their self-worth on academics following academic failure. They found that students with high self-esteem were “less affected by failure and showed slightly higher state of self-esteem and desire to appear competent as a function of their academic contingency of self-worth” (p. 1516). The current study adds to the existing literature available, demonstrating that students cited a fear of failure as a result of their prior academic dismissal. Further examination of the response to academic failure through the consideration of levels of self-worth and self-esteem is warranted.

**Research Question Two**

*How does participation in an academic intervention program assist previously academically dismissed and recently reinstated exploratory students to improve their academic performance after academic reinstatement?*

Four themes emerged from the data collected which addressed the second research question: students’ awareness of resources, students’ knowledge of strategies for academic success, student notions of not being alone, and student perceptions of academic advising.

**Students’ Awareness of Resources**

All of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, Scott, and Sam) described their enhanced awareness of the resources available to assist them in the achievement of academic success after reinstatement. However, an obstacle for some of the participants was utilizing the academic resources available to them. Awareness of
resources did not result in the utilization of these resources. All of the participants (Sam, Elizabeth, and Courtney) who were permitted to continue into the spring 2010 semester took advantage of on-campus resources, specifically the Academic Success Center. The other participants (Brooke, Amber, and Scott) who were not permitted to continue into the spring 2010 semester intended to take advantage of the resources across campus, but did not follow through with their intentions.

A plethora of current literature exists that focuses on the varying resources offered to at-risk students to assist in academic success. These resources, include, but are not limited to, academic and study skills courses (Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Patrick et al., 1988; Schultz et al., 1992), individual and group counseling (Engle et al., 2004), mandatory study sessions (Foreman et al., 1990), group advising sessions (Austin et al., 1997; Humphrey, 2006), and academic advising (Earl, 1988). Many of these resources are typically comprised in an academic intervention program. The participants in the current study were provided with multiple resources, including the Academic Success Center (tutoring), the Counseling Center, Psychological Services, the Career Services Center and the Student Advising Center. For the purpose of this discussion, I comment on academic advising resources separately later in this chapter. As mentioned by Zimmerman (2011), students’ “motivation is influenced also by their interest or valuing of a task or activity for its inherent properties rather than for its instrumental qualities in gaining other outcomes” (p. 57). Brooke and Amber did not take advantage of any of the resources available to them across campus during the semester after academic reinstatement. It is evident from the lack of utilization of the academic
resources that their value of these resources or activities available to them was questionable or they did not perceive a connection between these resources and their academic performance. It is assumed that Scott’s failing academic performance in his courses mirrors the efforts in seeking assistance from the resources across campus. No documentation from departments across campus was obtained demonstrating his utilization of their resources and services. Sam, Elizabeth, and Courtney, who were permitted to continue into the spring 2010 semester, took advantage of on-campus resources (specifically the Academic Success Center), although their utilization might not have been to the extent that was encouraged.

The role of motivation on the part of the participants in this study, this time in relation to their utilization of resources, once again surfaced as a factor contributing to their academic attainment after academic reinstatement. High motivation can result in an increase in students’ attention, choice of task, effort, and persistence (Zimmerman, 2011). According to Zimmerman, “Clearly, students’ level of motivation can play a vital role in initiating, guiding, and sustaining students’ effort to self-regulate their learning” (p. 50). Zimmerman defined self-regulation of learning as the students’ “ability to function academically on their own” (p. 49). The participants in this study verbalized and demonstrated their desire to apply for academic reinstatement and to return to college. However, their decision to apply for academic reinstatement did not necessarily equate to high motivation. Even though all participants in this study were aware of academic resources available to them, their minimal or complete lack of utilization of the on-
campus resources could be attributed to their lack of value of engaging in the activity (such as tutoring or counseling), or to their lack of motivation to engage in the activity.

**Students’ Knowledge of Strategies for Academic Success**

Existing literature has examined both academic and non-academic obstacles encountered by college students (Bray, Braxton, & Sullivan, 1999; Isaak et al., 2006; Kelley, 1996; Thomas, Bol, & Warkentin, 1991; Trombley, 2000; Weissberg, Berentsen, Coté, Cravey, & Heath, 1982;). Once again, there is extensive current literature on the varying intervention initiatives to address these academic and non-academic obstacles. These intervention initiatives include, but are not limited to, academic and study skills courses (Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Patrick et al., 1988; Schultz et al., 1992), individual and group counseling (Engle et al., 2004), mandatory study sessions (Foreman et al., 1990), group advising sessions (Austin et al., 1997; Humphrey, 2006), and academic advising (Earl, 1988).

For the purpose of the LEAP program, the academic intervention program was comprised of a mandatory half-day group session and 3 academic advising sessions that were encouraged, but not required. During the half-day group session, strategies for academic success were reviewed with the students. All of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott) described their increased knowledge of strategies to promote academic success and their intention for implementation of these strategies after their academic reinstatement. Some of the strategies discussed during the half-day group session were time management, goal setting, prioritization, and study skills. The extent to which these strategies were implemented varied between the
participants. As Kelley (1996) previously acknowledged, a high success rate in response to common intervention strategies provided to probationary students, including study skills presentations and time management workshops, is only garnered when the student attributes his or her academic difficulties to controllable factors, such as effort, values, and motivation. With that said, even though all participants in this study were knowledgeable of the strategies for academic success and reported the overall strategies content as helpful, the extent to which the participants in this study valued the strategies content and, therefore, actually implemented the strategies content is uncertain.

**Student Notions of Not Being Alone**

All of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Courtney, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott) stated the academic intervention program provided them with a sense of comfort in not being alone. The peer interaction among all academically reinstated students via the facilitated small group discussions during the mandatory half-day group session was similar in nature to the model depicted in Kamphoff et al.’s (2007) previous research. The discussion that resulted among the fellow academically reinstated students provided “a supportive environment for the students in which they can easily relate to others in similar academic situations” (Kamphoff et al., 2007, p. 402). This environment promoted both sharing and self-reflection.

The resultant behavior differed among the participants from knowing that others were in a comparable academic situation as a reinstated student. The feeling of finding comfort in knowing other reinstated students were in a comparable situation emerged in experiences of Elizabeth, Scott, and Brooke. Phrases used to describe this environment of
sharing and reflection included “not intimidating” and “comfortable,” which made the participants feel as though they were not embarrassed and that “we could relate to each other.”

Amber did not particularly enjoy the group discussion, but did like being surrounded by other students who were in the same academic situation as she was and that “you’re not the only person that screwed up.” I found Amber’s perspective very interesting considering after a review of the audiotapes from the group discussions that occurred during the mandatory half-group sessions, Amber was the most vocal of all the academically reinstated students. She shared her previous experiences with the fellow academically reinstated students and responded to their stories. Amber was fully engaged during the group discussion.

For Courtney and Sam, who actually met the minimum requirement of a 2.0 term GPA at the end of fall 2009, both felt comfort in knowing that other students were in the same academic position as they were. In addition to this sense of comfort, Courtney and Sam both described additional resultant feelings, including Courtney’s increased motivation (“an extra boost” and “an extra push”) and Sam’s enhanced confidence (“more confidence”), which they felt influenced their academic success after reinstatement. Further investigation is warranted to explore the value of peer interaction not only in the development of a sense of comfort among the academically reinstated students, but also in the creation of perceived-self-efficacy and motivation.
Student Perceptions of Academic Advising

The frequency of academic advising appointments and the students’ perception of academic advising with their individual assigned academic advisor varied among the participants in this study. Amber and Scott, both of whom did not meet with an academic advisor during the semester after their academic reinstatement, earned the lowest term GPAs (0.50 and 0.00, respectively) of all participants in this study.

The frequency of interactions with an academic advisor varied among the remaining participants (Elizabeth, Courtney, Sam, and Brooke). For example, Elizabeth met with her academic advisor during four scheduled advising appointments that were supplemented with walk-in appointments and regular e-mail communication. She had a very positive relationship with her academic advisor. Courtney only scheduled one advising appointment with her academic advisor. However, Courtney communicated regularly and informally regarding her academics with her academic advisor outside of the Student Advising Center, which she found to be beneficial to her. Sam met with his academic advisor twice during the semester. Brooke met with her academic advisor once to address class registration for the following semester. Overall, Elizabeth, Courtney, Sam, and Brooke attributed some level of value to academic advising in the pursuit of their academics. This value of academic advising was reflected in their scheduled advising appointments with their assigned academic advisors, which were encouraged, but not required, and in their comments regarding their academic advising experiences during the semester after their academic reinstatement.
The existing literature addresses varying academic advising strategies (Austin et al., 1997; Humphrey, 2006; Gordon & Habley, 2000), and more specifically, intrusive advising (DiMaria, 2006; Earl, 1988; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Schwebel, Walburn, Jacobsen, Jerrolds, & Klyce, 2008; Vander Schee, 2007). Earl (1988) defined intrusive advising as “deliberate structured student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty in order to motivate a student” (p. 28). Earl identified the components of intrusive advising were that the interventions were deliberate, problem-solving, and motivating.

There is inconsistency within the current research of the appropriate parameters of intrusive advising, specifically in regard to the requirement of mandatory advising sessions. DiMaria (2006) advocated for mandatory advising sessions, stating:

Since engagement strategies, such as academic and career advising, that encourage students to set and pursue goals can positively affect student retention and student success, the survey suggests that colleges should consider making academic and career counseling mandatory or build them into classroom activities, making them inescapable elements of a college experience. (p. 56)

Conversely, Schwebel et al. (2008) found “intrusive advising strategies designed to encourage but not require first-year students to attend advising sessions are successful” (p. 30). A major criticism of mandatory advising sessions is the “unhealthy relationship between advisor and student” (Schwebel et al., 2008, p. 30). Mandatory academic advising appointments can remove the accountability of the personal academic endeavors from the students and place the responsibility on the academic advisors instead. In turn,
students risk active engagement and full investment in their educational pursuit and in the
future attainment of a college degree. The varying strategies of academic advising and
the level of intrusive advising techniques highlight the struggle to provide a supportive
atmosphere for the students that fosters academic success, while promoting an
environment of accountability.

This current study added to the existing literature, demonstrating that students who
met with their academic advisors were more inclined to be successful after academic
reinstatement. Factors, such as perceived self-efficacy, motivation, goal orientation,
academic skills, and study skills, contribute to a student’s potential academic success after
academic reinstatement. With that said, this current study supports the inclusion of
academic advising as a component requiring consideration in the development of
intervention programs for academically reinstated students to increase their potential for
their academic success after returning to college.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, four recommendations need to be considered
in an effort to better support the needs of academically reinstated students:

- Recommendations for higher education administrators, academic advisors, and academic
success coaches.

**Recommendations for Higher Education Administrators**

McCabe (2000) acknowledged the prevalence of students who leave high school
with a deficiency in the adequate skillset to be successful at the college level. McCabe
also found that entering college students were underprepared in at least one of the basic
skills, which included reading, writing, and mathematics. McCabe identified the basic skills as reading, writing, and mathematics. Higher education administrators have to continue to examine the admission policies and support services of their institutions in light of the acknowledged disconnect between high school graduation standards and college-level work and expectations (Callan, Finney, Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006). As acknowledged by Callan et al.:

No matter which career paths students choose, the completion of a high school diploma should prepare them for existing opportunities for education and training beyond high school. The diploma should also provide their prospective employers and college admissions officers with the assurance that students have attained college-ready knowledge and skills. This can only occur if public policies for K-12 and postsecondary education converge upon a common set of goals. (p. 6)

It is obvious that this issue is well outside the scope of this current study. However, it is imperative that higher education administrators further examine the prevalence of academic under preparedness of high school graduates and entering college students. If institutions admit students who are obviously deficient in the necessary skills to begin college-level work, higher education administrators will have to identify the support services available to provide a platform for their future potential academic success in the absence of basic skills and academic preparation.

Likewise, it is necessary for higher education administrators to examine the policies implemented for previously academically dismissed students seeking academic reinstatement. Goldman, Blackwell, and Beach (2003) found that 19.5% of students who
returned to college after being academically suspended persisted to graduation. Within this current study, only 2 of the 6 participants (33%) actually met the requirement of a 2.0 semester GPA following their return to college after academic reinstatement. For the participants in this current study, it is too early to determine persistence to graduation. As exemplified in the aforementioned statistics, the success rate after returning to college and eventual persistence to graduation for academically reinstated students is minimal. From a resource perspective, the immense amount of time and effort required from representatives of various departments across the campus community to adequately support academically reinstated students is not reflected in the likelihood of academic success for these students who have already experienced academic failure during a previous college experience. The results of this current study support selectivity in determining academic reinstatement decisions. Academic reinstatement should not be guaranteed. The opportunity to pursue a college education after academic dismissal is a privilege, not a right. Academic reinstatement decisions should be determined on an individual basis through an application appeal process. As supported by Brady (2008), “The individual [suspension readmission student, also referred to as academically reinstated] student needs must be addressed in order to help the student become successful. Each student is unique in terms of needs and abilities which may impact success” (p. 64). As higher education administrators determine both academic reinstatement policies and application appeal decisions, it is essential that academically reinstated students are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If the decision is to approve the academic reinstatement petition, the institution has an obligation to offer support services
personalized to the needs and abilities of the student. This will require full support from various departments across the campus community.

Higher education administrators need to continuously assess the policies, support services, and resultant level of success of academically reinstated students after their return to college. Intervention programs need to be evaluated to ensure that the support services we are providing to academically reinstated students are adequately fostering an environment that promotes the potential for academic success. I have to reiterate that we are providing academically reinstated students with an opportunity to return to college. As higher education administrators and members of the campus community, we can provide a framework for academic success through the support services and intervention programs we implement. However, academically reinstated students need to be held accountable and responsible for their actions and their decisions after their return to college.

As a result of this study, there are various recommendations regarding the design of intervention programs for academically reinstated students. As mentioned by Zimmerman (2011), “Students’ level of motivation can play a vital role in initiating, guiding, and sustaining students’ effort to self-regulate their learning” (p. 50). Zimmerman defined self-regulation of learning as the students’ “ability to function academically on their own” (p. 49). Based on the findings of this current study, the participants outlined their desire to apply for academic reinstatement and to return to college. However, their decision to apply for academic reinstatement did not necessarily substantiate a high level of motivation after their return to college. During the academic
reinstatement application appeal process, the previously dismissed student should
demonstrate evidence of the self-regulation of learning. The sole desire of returning to
college does not attest that a student is able to function as a self-regulated learner.

resilient sense of efficacy as well as imparting skills. Experiences in exercising control
over troublesome situations serve as efficacy builders” (p. 28). Bandura stressed, “To
build a sense of efficacy, people must develop skills on how to influence their own
motivation and behavior” (p. 28). With that said, it is recommended to higher education
administrators that a central focus in the development of intervention programs for
academically reinstated students is to create programming that fosters an environment in
which students are continuously charged with the goal of functioning as a self-regulated
learner.

Kelly (2010) advocated to “learn about the suspended [or, for the purpose of this
current study, referred to as academically dismissed] student’s background” (p. 135).
During the academic reinstatement application appeal process, the student’s perceived
self-efficacy, self-worth, motivation, and academic ability (adequate skills) need to be
considered prior to a decision being determined. Bandura (1997) described the
significance of self-efficacy on an individual’s course of action, stating:

People’s beliefs in their efficacy have diverse effects. Such beliefs influence the
courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given
endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their
resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-
aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize. (p. 3)

The academic reinstatement application appeal process should include questions that assist in gathering a well-rounded perspective of a student’s perceived self-efficacy in an attempt to determine their belief in their capacity to be academically successful and the corresponding actions that will assist in achieving academic success if they were permitted to return to college.

As part of the academic reinstatement application appeal process, obtaining an understanding of the factor(s) that a student associates with his or her self-worth is recommended. Insight into a student’s self-worth will provide beneficial information regarding the factors a student bases his or her level of self-esteem. Students who attributed their self-worth to their academics were more prone to academic and financial problems (Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003), were less intrinsically motivated (Deci et al., 1991), and were more likely to have lower self-esteem and experience depression (Niiya et al., 2004). Determining the source of a student’s self-worth will provide beneficial information regarding their level of self-esteem, in addition to a greater understanding of his or her source(s) of motivation.

Determining the source(s) of motivation that stimulate a student to apply for academic reinstatement and return to college will provide valuable insight for higher education administrators during the academic reinstatement application appeal process. In this current study, most of the participants (Amber, Brooke, Elizabeth, Sam, and Scott) based the attainment of a college degree on a stipulation to obtain an alternate goal as a
college graduate. These stipulations are sources of extrinsic motivation. As described by Eppler and Harju (1997), it is necessary for students to become more actively engaged and fully invested in the learning goal process, which will help to enhance intrinsic motivation, rather than solely focusing on the target outcomes associated with extrinsic motivation.

Academic ability or the adequate skills necessary to be academically successful at the college-level need to be addressed during the academic reinstatement application appeal process. Schunk (1989) stated, “High self-efficacy will not produce competent performances when requisite skills are lacking” (p. 175). Reviewing high school and college academic transcripts, entrance test scores, placement and performance in basic skills courses, academic performance in courses completed at other institutions during the timeframe of academic dismissal, and the student’s academic goals if approved for academic reinstatement will provide additional insight into the student’s potential for academic success.

The academic reinstatement application appeal process is an intricate part of determining the needs of students seeking to return to college. As mentioned previously, the opportunity to pursue a college education after academic dismissal is a privilege, not a right. Rather than a rite of passage, higher education administrators need to utilize the academic reinstatement application appeal process as a means to acquire as much information about the student seeking academic reinstatement. This insight will assist in making a well-informed decision regarding the student’s petition for academic reinstatement. In addition, as acknowledged by Kelly (2010), “Knowing this information
[the suspended student’s background] will assist colleges and universities in developing appropriate support mechanisms for students who are reinstated” (p. 136). Therefore, obtaining a thorough understanding of the student’s perceived self-efficacy, self-worth, motivation, and academic ability (adequate skills) will be a point of reference to guide the recommended support services and intrusive academic advising strategies if a student is approved for academic reinstatement.

Finally, in the development of intervention programs for academically reinstated students, it is recommended that modeling experiences be incorporated. Specifically, it is encouraged to include former academically dismissed students who have been successful after being academically reinstated and returning to college. “Modeling influences do much more than simply provide a social standard against which to appraise personal capabilities. People actively seek proficient models who possess the competencies to which they aspire” (Bandura, 1997, p. 88). Bandura summarized, “Visualizing oneself applying the modeled strategies successfully strengthens self-belief that one can do it in actuality” (p. 93).

Within this current study, all of the reinstated students shared their previous academic experiences with one another during the group discussion of the mandatory half-day group session. Although this group discussion was positively regarded by most of the reinstated students, the perspectives and experiences shared from students who were academically successful after being reinstated could enhance a student’s perceived self-efficacy. It could also provide insight into strategies for academic success after returning to college. Mentorship from previously academically reinstated students who
were successful after returning to college could be incorporated in an effort to enhance the modeling experience within an academic intervention program. The manner in which modeling experiences would be included within an academic intervention program requires further exploration.

**Recommendations for Academic Advisors**

Based on the findings of the current study in addition to existing literature, students who met with their academic advisors were more inclined to be successful after academic reinstatement. It is recommended that intrusive academic advising strategies be implemented in the development of academic intervention programs for reinstated students. Earl (1988) defined intrusive advising as “deliberate structured student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty in order to motivate a student” (p. 28). Components of intrusive academic advising were identified as interventions that were deliberate, problem-solving, and motivating (Earl, 1988).

As supported by Brady (2008), “This population [suspension readmission students, also referred to as academically reinstated students] needs to be addressed on an individual level with interventions such as intrusive advising rather than categorical classification based upon variables of personal demographics and academic behaviors” (p. 63). The presence of an academic advisor during a student’s academic reinstatement journey can be a source of empowerment, motivation, and guidance. However, I want to reiterate that the implementation of intrusive academic advising strategies neither diminishes nor eliminates the accountability and responsibility placed on the academically reinstated student after returning to college. From my perspective, the relationship
between a reinstated student and an academic advisor should be collaborative, meaning that student should take an active role in his or her educational pursuits, while working closely with an academic advisor on a consistent basis.

As recommended by Schwebel et al. (2008), I advocate for academic advising appointments to be strongly encouraged, but not required throughout multiple sessions during the semester. Vander Schee (2007) recommended at least three meetings during the semester before “an appreciable difference in GPA was noted” (p. 55). The level of intrusive academic advising is characterized by the techniques implemented in working with the student and through the inclusion of timely and relevant topics pertaining to the individual needs of the academically reinstated student. The intrusive academic advising strategies help to provide a supportive environment for the student that fosters academic success, while promoting an environment of accountability.

Finally, it is recommended that the support mechanisms administered to promote the academic success of academically reinstated students should be the result of a campus-wide partnership among various departments throughout the institution. These departments include, but are not limited to, the Academic Success Center (tutoring), the Counseling Center, Psychological Services, the Career Services Center, and the Student Advising Center (academic advising). The potential academic success of academically reinstated students should not fall solely on academic advisors. The needs of this at-risk college student population require the support and presence of various members and departments throughout the campus community. In designing an academic intervention program for academically reinstated students, academic advisors assume a vital role in the
implemented support mechanisms. However, it is imperative that various departments throughout the campus community partner with academic advisors in the development of support strategies that will promote the academic success of academically reinstated students after returning to college. Student retention and academic success is a campus-wide initiative. As exemplified by this current study and encouraged by DiMaria (2006), the educational endeavors of at-risk college students should be an initiative supported by various departments throughout the campus community.

**Recommendations for Academic Success Coaches**

In this current study, participants did not utilize psychological counseling services after academic reinstatement. Elizabeth was the only participant who met with a counselor after academic reinstatement. With the immense personal and emotional obstacles encountered by the participants, the absence of psychological counseling services utilization within almost all of the participants’ stories was noteworthy.

As demonstrated through the participants’ experiences in this current study, support services must be implemented to address the personal and emotional needs of academically reinstated students. This type of support service is inappropriate to defer to academic advisors given their lack of professional preparation in addressing such needs. In an effort to provide additional personal and emotional support to the academically reinstated at-risk student population, I recommend including an academic coach as part of the academic intervention program. According to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA; n.d.-a, ¶3):
Academic coaching is an interactive process that focuses on the personal relationship created between the student and the coach. The coach challenges the student to think about his or her personal and/or professional goals in order to relate them to his or her academic/educational goals. In this learning process, it is important for the coach to encourage the student to become more self-aware by understanding his or her strengths, values, interests, purpose, and passion.

The inclusion of an academic success coach as a member of the academic intervention team would provide a clear distinction between the role of the academic advisor and the role of the academic success coach. From my perspective, the academic success coach would be able to provide the intensive attention to this at-risk student population. The expected levels of education and experience that I envision the academic success coaches having will provide another distinction between the academic advisors and the counselors to ensure that they are able to adequately provide the “basic counseling techniques” (Robinson & Bloom, 2009) when meeting with reinstated students. Although there is admitted overlap between the skillset of academic success coaches and academic advisors, academic success coaches will be able to apply appropriate counseling approaches during more frequent and intensive meetings with the reinstated students compared to academic advisors. This will help to diminish the presence of a potential conflict of interest when attempting to serve multiple roles in working with academically reinstated students. The academic success coach would act as a mentor for the reinstated students, offering intensive guidance and support, challenging them to consider their personal, academic,
and career goals (Robinson & Bloom, 2009). Responsibility and accountability on the part of the reinstated students would be stressed throughout this process.

An academic success coach would be an active member of the academic intervention team, working in conjunction with one another and collaboratively with the academically reinstated students. He or she would have the professional training and educational background to address the personal and emotional needs of the academically reinstated students. An academic success coach would assume the role of an engaged and familiar resource, utilizing “basic counseling techniques” (Robinson & Bloom, 2009). By no means is the academic success coach a substitute for the professional counseling services available on campus. Rather, the academic success coach would use basic counseling skills to support students and would provide the appropriate referral for psychological counseling services (if warranted) for more extensive counseling needs.

As mentioned previously, although the participants in this current study had access to psychological counseling services, most of them did not utilize these resources even though the presence of personal and emotional issues were clearly present in each of their life experiences. The academic success coach would provide immediate personal and emotional support to the academically reinstated students, serving as a point of contact for these students. I am not attempting to displace the responsibility of seeking personal and emotional support services from the academically reinstated student to the academic success coach. Rather, I am striving to create an avenue for academically reinstated students to address their personal and emotional obstacles with a professional who can utilize basic counseling skills within the parameters of this academic intervention.
program. The goal of incorporating an academic success coach in the academic intervention program is to create a safe and comfortable environment for academically reinstated students to explore the impact of their personal and emotional obstacles on their previous and future academic endeavors. Once again, the academic success coach is not a substitute for extensive psychological counseling services. The academic success coach is a supplement to the overall support services of the academic intervention program for academically reinstated students.

There are a variety of factors associated with the inclusion of an academic success coach as a member of the academic intervention team that requires further exploration. First of all, the role of the academic success coach and the requirements of the academic intervention program need to be determined. Implementing requirements throughout the summer session prior to an approved fall semester academic reinstatement would provide the opportunity for academically reinstated students to begin to address their academic and personal obstacles prior to the start of classes. Based on the findings of this current study, a recommendation would be to include group support sessions for the academically reinstated students, which would reinforce the theme that students are not alone in this academic reinstatement journey. The design of the group support sessions should promote an environment of self-reflection and sharing. It is also recommended to incorporate modeling experiences and to cultivate mentoring relationships within the design of academic intervention programs for academically reinstated students.

From a broader perspective, the promotion of psychological counseling services within an academic intervention program needs to be further explored. Ethically, it is
necessary to investigate mandated versus voluntary counseling requirements for academically reinstated students (Kiracofe & Buller, 2009; Schwitzer, Grogan, Kaddoura, & Ochoa, 1993). Secondly, would the student have the right to decline the counseling services? Lastly, if counseling would be required, “The goal of counseling is not (and should not be) to keep students in school” (Sharkin, 2004, p. 105). It might be determined that not returning to college is truly in the best interest of the student. As Sharkin stated:

To remain effective with such [unhappy or dissatisfied] students, college counselors need to remain relatively neutral about whether students stay in or leave the school. Students may benefit from talking about the prospect of withdrawing or transferring in an atmosphere where they feel no pressure to make a decision to stay. (pp. 105-106)

The inclusion of psychological counseling services within an academic intervention program was outside the focus of this current study and warrants further examination in the future.

**Limitations**

A limitation of this study was researcher bias. My prior role as an academic advisor within the Student Advising Center, which was housed in the College of Undergraduate Studies, resulted in the development of biases through my previous professional experiences in working with academically reinstated students. A peer examiner provided feedback on the data collected and the categories and themes that emerged from the data in an effort to counter the role of researcher bias within this study. Although I attempted to remain cognizant of any biases during my analysis and
interpretation of the findings of this current study, I have to acknowledge the possibility of researcher bias.

I do want to acknowledge that this current study focused on the needs and experiences of exploratory (undecided) reinstated students, which could be perceived as a limitation, due to the lack of generalizability of students declared in alternate majors. Due to their designation as exploratory majors, the role of faculty advisors in the academic success of academically reinstated students was not investigated during this current study. This research study was conducted at a large, public, mid-western, four-year institution, which does not reflect all varying types of institutions. The policies and procedures associated with academically reinstated students are unique to the large, public, mid-western, four-year institution where this study was conducted. This consideration would influence the transferability of the findings of this current study. This study only focused on one academic intervention program, which challenges the generalizability of the findings. However, the goal of this current study and qualitative research is not generalizability, but instead particularity (Creswell, 2009). With that said, the transferability of the findings from this current study would be dependent upon the similarity and applicability of the particular situation.

The sample participant size could be viewed as a limitation of this study. The study included six academically reinstated students. I was cognizant of age, gender, and race in the sampling procedures as to target a sample participant pool reflective of the demographic profile of the larger population of LEAP participants. I feel that although my sample size of six academically reinstated students could be perceived as small, it
adequately reflected the demographics of the larger sample participant pool. Future studies could be conducted to expand the sample size of the participants.

The data collection methods that were utilized during the study could be regarded as a limitation. I conducted two individual face-to-face interviews with the six participants. I gathered data from the review of academic transcripts, reinstatement applications and letters, and journal reflections. Finally, I observed the half-day group session of the LEAP program. However, there are numerous adjustments that I could have made to the design of the study, specifically means of data collection, to enhance the richness of the data collected.

As the researcher, I acknowledge that a limitation of this research study is the absence of additional techniques implemented to gather a well-rounded understanding of the participants’ lives as academically reinstated students. Although I conducted an interview at the beginning of the semester and another interview toward the end of the semester, in hindsight, I could have followed the students throughout the entire semester to fully witness their varying experiences within and outside of the classroom, interactions with fellow students, and relationships with faculty and staff across campus. Observing the participants during each advising session would have offered further insight into their needs and experiences after reinstatement. Additional interviews with the participants and observations of the participants engaging in student environment, such as within the classroom and during tutoring sessions would have bolstered the data collected. Observing the participants outside of the structured interview setting and half-day group session would have given a more candid perspective of their reality as a reinstated
student, especially if observed in multiple environments (classroom, with peers, academic advising sessions, etc.) throughout the entirety of the semester or longer. A longitudinal study over the course of multiple semesters would have been advantageous. It would have provided a foundation for understanding the prolonged needs and experiences of the participants as reinstated students.

Rather than requesting the completion of a journal reflection at the conclusion of the half-day group session of the LEAP program, weekly journal reflections written throughout the entire semester would have provided a deeper understanding of the participants’ academic and personal journey after reinstatement. Requesting a log to be kept by participants would have provided a deeper insight into their daily activities. Logs would have also been a source for discussion topics during follow-up interviews, which would have given additional access to the participants’ experiences after academic reinstatement. In hindsight, the data collection methods implemented during this study could have been amended to reinforce the data gathered and, in turn, strengthen the analysis.

Finally, a limitation of this current study was the loss of a participant (Scott) during the research study. Scott participated in the first interview and attended the mandatory half-day group session. However, he did not participate in the second interview. Scott’s lack of participation in the full research study could be perceived as a threat to the internal validity of this current study due to mortality, or “a differential loss of participants” (Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-Martella, 1999, p. 42). However, I feel that his lack of full participation in the current study mirrored his approach to his
academics after academic reinstatement and was reflective of his failing academic performance in his courses (many of the courses he stopped attending or never attended). Therefore, although the loss of a participant in a study can be considered a limitation, I feel that Scott’s lack of participation in the second interview is a valuable reflection of his experience as a reinstated student.

**Implications for Future Research**

Further examination of the response to academic failure through the consideration of levels of self-worth and self-esteem is warranted. It is imperative to further examine factors, such as effort, adequate skills, outcome expectations, and perceived value, in relation to a student who demonstrates high perceived self-efficacy after academic dismissal due to a previous dismal academic performance. Further investigation is warranted to explore the value of peer interaction not only in the development of a sense of comfort among the academically reinstated students, but also in the creation of perceived-self-efficacy and motivation. The manner in which modeling experiences would be included within an academic intervention program requires further exploration.

The role of psychological counseling services within an academic intervention program should be examined. One area that is of particular interest to me is the utilization of motivational interviewing (MI) in working with academically reinstated students. Motivational interviewing is a “counseling approach” that has been used in the field of addictions (Lewis & Osborn, 2004). As stated by Lewis and Osborn, “In MI, the process of facilitating and enhancing intrinsic motivation and reducing resistance is guided by several principles: avoiding argumentation, rolling with resistance, expressing empathy,
developing discrepancies, and supporting self-efficacy” (p. 39). With the immense personal and emotional obstacles encountered by the participants in this study, I feel that further exploration of counseling approaches to help students overcome these issues is warranted. Motivational interviewing embraces the need for motivation and change through the inclusion of the following components identified by the acronym FRAMES: direct feedback, responsibility for change, advice to change, menu of strategies for change, empathy, and client self-efficacy (Miller & Sanchez, 1994). I feel that this counseling approach could be valuable in working with academically reinstated students given the underlying themes of self-efficacy and motivation that resonated within the findings of this current study.

Another area of future research that would be recommended would be to conduct an ethnographic research study focused on one of the academically reinstated students, following the student through the academic reinstatement journey as he or she returns to college and hopefully eventually persists to graduation. Utilizing ethnography as the strategy of inquiry allows the researcher to study “an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting primarily observational and interview data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 229). An ethnographic research study would provide a holistic understanding of the experience of the academically reinstated student. Although the risk of academic failure is a significant possibility when researching an academically reinstated student, I feel that this strategy of inquiry could generate rich data, providing extensive insight into the student’s academic reinstatement journey well beyond his or her return to college after the first semester. This would add to the existing
literature of academically reinstated students, considering a comparable study has not been conducted at this point.

**Summary**

Through this current study, I sought to provide a platform for academically reinstated students to have a voice and to reflect on the trials and triumphs that led to their previous academic failure. Even though the minimal academic success after academic reinstatement is well documented, I wanted to give members of this at-risk college student population the opportunity to tell their personal stories of academic failure and to describe their individual academic reinstatement journey. The findings of this study provided a better understanding of the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students after reinstatement. The findings of this current study are intended to guide best practices in working with academically reinstated students. With this information, resources, interventions, and programs can be implemented to enhance the potential academic success for future academically reinstated students.

If institutions of higher education are going to continue to reinstate previously academically dismissed students, we have an obligation to provide the necessary support services to these students. It is unethical to reinstate students who have already experienced significant academic failure without the appropriate structure and adequate guidance that might foster academic success after reinstatement. I challenge my fellow higher education administrators, policymakers, academic advisors, faculty instructors, and researchers to consider the needs and experiences of academically reinstated students to
guide policy, practices, and the development of academic intervention programs for this at-risk student population.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR REINSTATEMENT
TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES/ EXPLORATORY PROGRAM
(MORELAND CAMPUS)
Appendix A

Guidelines for Reinstatement to Undergraduate Studies/ Exploratory Program

(Moreland Campus)

Dismissed students may apply for reinstatement to the college that dismissed them or the college they would like to enter if reinstated. The minimum academic dismissal period is twelve months. Reinstatement following the dismissal period is neither automatic nor guaranteed. Students may be reinstated only if they provide convincing evidence of probable academic success if permitted to return to the University. Undergraduate Studies is not likely to approve reinstatement of students who previously were dismissed and reinstated, or students who have accumulated a substantial number of credit hours or have an excessive quality point deficiency. For some students intending to pursue majors with selective admission requirements, specified certification standards, or additional program and graduation requirements, reinstatement is not in their best interest and is unlikely. Students applying for reinstatement to Undergraduate Studies must submit the following to the reinstatement Committee, Undergraduate Studies, Moreland University:

1. The completed Application for Reinstatement to Undergraduate Studies
2. A typed, detailed statement addressing:
   - why you want to return to Moreland University
   - factors contributing to your previous performance at the University (including how those issues have been resolved)
   - what you have been doing since dismissal
   - a detailed action plan to improve your academic performance

The deadline for submitting reinstatement applications and a typed, detailed statement is July 1 for any fall semester and December 1 for any spring semester. Questions regarding reinstatement to Undergraduate Studies should be directed to the Undergraduate Studies Office at (###) ###-####.
APPENDIX B

APPLICATION FOR REINSTATEMENT TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES
MORELAND UNIVERSITY—MORELAND CAMPUS
(FOLLOWING 12-MONTH DISMISSAL PERIOD)
Appendix B

Application for Reinstatement to Undergraduate Studies

Moreland University—Moreland Campus

(Following 12-Month Dismissal Period)

Please complete and submit this application ONLY if you are requesting to be considered for reinstatement by Undergraduate Studies to the Exploratory program. Students seeking reinstatement by a college other than Undergraduate Studies should contact the appropriate college/school regarding requirements, procedures, deadlines, and application.

Exploratory Students return application, required statement, and supporting materials to:

Reinstatement Committee
Undergraduate Studies
Moreland University
PO Box ####
Moreland, USA #######

Deadlines: This application, statement, and supporting materials must be received by July 1 for the fall semester and December 1 for the spring semester.

Name_________________________________Student Number________ - _____ - ________

Date of Birth___________________________Telephone Number______ - _____ - ________

Mailing Address__________________________________________________

City______________________State_________________Zip______________

E-mail Address__________________________________________________________________

1. What semester/year did you enter Moreland University? __________________________

2. What semester/year were you dismissed from Moreland University? ________________

3. Was this your first dismissal from Moreland University? ____Yes  ____No

4. Check the academic unit and/or specify the regional campus from which you were dismissed:

___Architecture/Env. Design  ___Education, Health and Human Services
___Arts & Sciences  ___Nursing
___Business  ___Technology
___Communication & Information  ___Undergraduate Studies (Exploratory)
___College of the Arts
5. What was your academic major (and minor, if applicable) at the time of dismissal?
   ___Exploratory ___Other (specify)______________________________

6. Intended major (after Exploratory) ________________________________

7. I apply for reinstatement effective ___Fall ___Spring Year_____

8. Since your dismissal from Moreland University, have you attended any other college or university?
   ___Yes ___No

   If yes, list all institutions, dates attended, and number of credit hours completed.
   NOTE: You must have official transcript(s) sent directly to Undergraduate Studies at the address indicated at the top of this form. Applications will not be processed until transcripts are received.

   Institution  Dates Attended  Credit Hours
   __________________  _____________  _____________
   __________________  _____________  _____________
   __________________  _____________  _____________

9. Number of additional credit hours you plan to complete before returning to Moreland University ______

10. Do you intend to repeat any 10000 or 20000 level courses under the course repeat policy (effective Spring 2008)? ___Yes ___No

    If yes, which courses do you intend to repeat?

    Department  Number  Title
    __________________  _______  __________________
    __________________  _______  __________________
    __________________  _______  __________________

11. Were you employed during your last attendance? ___Yes ___No

    If yes, where?_________________________________ How many hours per week?_____

12. Do you plan to be employed if you return?
    ___Yes ___No  How many hours per week?_____

13. How many credit hours per semester do you intend to take?_______
By my signature, I attest to the fact that all information given on this application is complete and correct and that any omission or falsification will result in denial of admission or immediate dismissal.

____________________________________   ________________________
Student’s Signature                      Date

Administrative Action   ____________________________
Date

Reinstatement: ___Approved ___Disapproved

for: ___Fall ___Spring ___Year Probation Level____

US Administrator

revised 1/14/08
APPENDIX C

FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Appendix C

First Interview Protocol

First Interview:

a) What are your reasons for returning to school?

b) What factors led to your decision to apply for academic reinstatement at your previous institution rather than applying to another institution of higher education?

c) What factors contributed to your previous academic performance?

d) How have these factors been resolved since your academic dismissal?

e) What external adjustments did you have to make in your life in preparation for your return to college?

f) What personal or behavioral adjustments did you have to make in your life in preparation for your return to college?

g) How did you feel when you initially received your academic dismissal letter?

h) What does it mean to you to be a reinstated student?

i) What is your plan of action to improve your academic performance upon reinstatement?
Appendix D
Second Interview Protocol

Second Interview:

a) Describe your overall participation in the LEAP program.

b) What aspects of the LEAP program did you find beneficial?

c) What aspects of the LEAP program did you not find beneficial?

d) What resources (i.e., Academic Success Center, Counseling and Human Development Center, Psychological Services, Student Accessibility Services, Career Services Center, and Student Advising Center) described during the half-day required group session of the LEAP program did you utilize?

e) What strategies for academic success (i.e., goal setting, time management, prioritizing, and study skills) described during the half-day required group session of the LEAP program did you implement throughout the fall semester?

f) How has your participation in the LEAP program influenced your academic performance this semester?

g) Could you have improved your academic performance upon academic reinstatement without participating in a structured reinstatement intervention program like the LEAP program? Please explain.
APPENDIX E

JOURNAL REFLECTION
Appendix E

Journal Reflection

a) How did it feel walking into the LEAP half-day session today knowing that every other student had been previously academically dismissed and in a comparable academic situation to your own?

b) How would you describe your participation in today’s LEAP half-day session?

c) What aspects of the LEAP half-day required group session did you find beneficial? Please explain.

d) What aspects of the LEAP program half-day required group session did you not find beneficial? Please explain.

e) What resources (i.e., Academic Success Center, Counseling and Human Development Center, Psychological Services, Student Accessibility Services, Career Services Center, and Student Advising Center) described during today’s group session do you plan to utilize?

f) How will the(se) previously mentioned resource(s) assist you this semester?

g) What strategies for academic success (i.e., goal setting, time management, prioritizing, and study skills) described during today’s group session do you plan to implement throughout the fall semester?

h) How will the(se) previously mentioned resource(s) assist you this semester?
APPENDIX F

LEAP PROGRAM, FALL SEMESTER 2009
Appendix F

LEAP Program, Fall Semester 2009

LEAP Program, Fall Semester 2009

Agenda

8:00 – 8:30 a.m. Sign in

8:30 – 8:45 a.m. Welcome, Goals of Program, Why You Are Here

8:45 – 9:15 a.m. Reflection Assignment

9:15 – 9:45 a.m. Discussion of Reflection Assignment

9:45-10:00 a.m. Break

10:00-10:15 a.m. Explanation of “Grade Goal Setting” and “Time Management” assignments

10:15 – 11:15 a.m. “Successful Second Chance” Panel

11:15 – 11:45 a.m. Complete assignment of choice; Work individually with campus representatives from: Academic Success Center, Undergraduate Studies, Psychological Services, and Academic Advising

11:45 – 12:00 p.m. Wrap up, Questions, Evaluation of program
APPENDIX G

LEARNING TO ESTABLISH ACADEMIC PRIORITIES
Appendix G

Learning to Establish Academic Priorities

Goals:
1. Help you identify the issues, situations, and obstacles that brought you to this academic situation.
2. Help you identify goals that will counteract these past issues, situations, and obstacles allowing you to achieve success academically and personally.
3. Help you plan a strategy of academic success by using available resources at [Moreland University].

1. Why are you here? What factors brought you to this situation?
I am here at the LEAP program because:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2. What went well during your time at [Moreland University]?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

3. Why is a college education important to you?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

4. Who is your support system while in college?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

5. Why are you re-committing yourself now?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

6. What are some of your long-term goals?
a.
b.
c.

Short Term Goals to achieve long term goals: These are the smaller steps that will help you achieve your Long Term Goals.
7. What specific short term goals can you start this semester that will enable you to achieve your long-term goals?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

8. How do your short term goals help you achieve your long term goals?
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

9. What actions do you need to do in order to achieve your short term goals?
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

10. Are there any barriers or obstacles that might get in the way of achieving your short term or long term goals?
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

11. What resources might help you achieve your goals? This can include advisor, family, friends, Career Services, Academic Success Center etc.
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

12. Reflecting back at what brought you to this situation and your recommitment to your education, what will YOU do differently to keep balance and be successful at [Moreland University]?
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

13. This is your opportunity to make a success of your second chance. You have to meet the University’s demands, professors’ demands, and graduation requirements to earn a degree. Are you willing and able to do this?

    I am willing to give up
    To get
    The goal that I won’t stop until I get is
14. What do you still need to help you achieve your goal (information, support, tutoring, counseling, etc.)?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Adapted from *Students Towards Success: Academic Recovery* on National Academic Advising Association’s (NACADA) website:
www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/links/documents/S099H8.doc
APPENDIX H
GRADE GOAL PLAN
Appendix H

Grade Goal Plan

An achievable grade I want to receive in __________ class is a(n) ___.

In order to get this grade, I think I need to do these things **during class:**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

And these things **outside of class:**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

In the past, these study strategies worked well for me:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

In the past, these study strategies did not work well for me:

- 
- 
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New study strategies I would like to try are:

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This is how hard I’ll have to work to achieve this grade.

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Form was used during the LEAP program. The origin of this handout is unknown.
APPENDIX I

MY WEEKLY SCHEDULE
## Appendix I

### My Weekly Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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Appendix J

Monthly Calendar

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

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<td><strong>1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Meet with your Academic Advisor during the next 5 weeks</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong>&lt;br&gt;to review your goals and strategize for the semester.</td>
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<td><strong>13</strong>&lt;br-LAST DAY TO ADJUST SCHEDULE (ADD OR CHANGE CLASSES)</td>
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Meet with your Academic Advisor during the next 5 weeks to discuss your progress and plan for Spring Semester.
**NOVEMBER 2009**

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<tr>
<td>8 LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM A CLASS. GRADE OF “W” WILL BE ASSIGNED.</td>
<td>9 Meet with your Academic Advisor during the next 5 weeks to</td>
<td>10 Discuss your progress and strategize for Spring Semester.</td>
<td>11 VETERANS DAY—NO CLASSES</td>
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<td>21 MIDTERM GRADES AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING ON FLASHLINE</td>
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Adapted from Skip Downing’s *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life* (2005).
APPENDIX K

LEARNING TO ESTABLISH ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

PANEL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Appendix K

Learning to Establish Academic Priorities

Panel Discussion Questions

Thursday, August 27th, 10:15am

1. Please introduce yourself and share your role(s) within the [Moreland University] Community.

2. We have all heard the saying, “if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” Can you share an example from your or someone else’s experience of a successful second try?

3. From your perspective, what techniques do successful college students utilize?

4. Why is it important to set academic goals? What is an example of a realistic goal for a LEAP student for the upcoming semester?

5. If you are representing a resource on campus, how could your office assist LEAP students in achieving their academic goals?

6. What final advice can you offer LEAP students as they start college again (For Example: suggestions on goal setting, time management, support systems, holding jobs, living environment, extracurricular activities, etc.)?

7. At this point, we will open up the discussion to questions from the students.

Thank you for your time!
APPENDIX L

LEAP JOURNAL REFLECTION
Appendix L

Leap Journal Reflection

1) How did it feel walking into the LEAP half-day session today knowing that every other student had been previously academically dismissed and in a comparable academic situation to your own?

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2) How would you describe your participation in today’s LEAP half-day session?

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3) What aspects of the LEAP half-day required group session did you find beneficial? Please explain.

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4) What aspects of the LEAP program half-day required group session did you not find beneficial? Please explain.

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5) What resources (i.e., Academic Success Center, Counseling and Human Development Center, Psychological Services, Student Accessibility Services, Career Services Center, and Student Advising Center) described during today’s group session do you plan to utilize?


6) How will the(se) previously mentioned resource(s) assist you this semester?


7) What strategies for academic success (i.e., goal setting, time management, prioritizing, and study skills) described during today’s group session do you plan to implement throughout the fall semester?

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8) How will the(se) previously mentioned resource(s) assist you this semester?

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REFERENCES


