

# eleven update

Commission XI: Student Development In The Two-Year College



Spring 2006

## Commission XI:

Student Development in Two-Year Colleges is an affiliate of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

Commission XI is directly concerned with issues relative to student development programs in two-year institutions. The Commission is designed to promote the improvement of student development programs; enhance the professional development of student development personnel; and serve as an advocate for student development programs in two-year institutions.

Commission XI enhances your work with all types of students by:

- Giving you access to our newsletters
- Providing professional development opportunities through sponsored programs at ACPA's annual convention, Commission sponsored regional workshops, and co-sponsored programs with other national student development in two-year college focused organizations
- Affording opportunities for you to network with other student development professionals via internet, conferences and workshops
- Connecting you to job placement opportunities through ACPA's Placement services
- Providing exposure to the most current research theory in student personnel practice and access to research awards for student development in two year colleges
- Providing opportunities for you to dialogue with other college student development professionals from diverse cultures and backgrounds
- Recognizing members contributions through the following rewards: Service to the Profession, New Professional, Outstanding Publication and Innovative New Program

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# FROM THE CHAIR:

*Dear Colleagues:*

*As we head into the Spring Convention, I realize that I am coming to the end of my first year as chair of the Commission. It has gone by very quickly, yet I am amazed by all the work that has been done by our commission members. Last year at convention, we set out to ensure that our sponsored programs continued to meet the needs of faculty and student affairs practitioners at two-year colleges, and I think you will see from our list of programs this year, we have met that goal. Sally Barton-Dingee, our newsletter editor, also charged the commission with writing an award winning publication. With her hard work and the contributions from many commission members, we were recognized this year by ACPA for our newsletter. We also continue to work on membership, including encouraging individuals from two-year colleges to join ACPA and our commission. In doing so, we continue to work towards the goals of the commission and of ACPA.*

*I hope each of you will take the time to join us at the Open Business Meeting in the Westin – Caucus Room on March 21 at 4:15 PM. We will be addressing some important issues for the Commission at the meeting and your involvement in these discussions is critical. Additionally, we hope you will join us at the other commission sponsored events listed in this newsletter. All of the events offer great opportunities to get involved with the commission and to network with peers.*

*I hope you enjoy the conference in Indy and thanks again for all your support!*

*Sarah E. Merranko, Ed.D*

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## SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?:

### The Advantages of Earning an Associate Degree

*By: Sally Barton Dingee, Monroe Community College*

Each year, around this time, several of my advisees ask about transferring to another college before earning their Associate degree. For some students, there might be an advantage this. For example, they might be interested in a specific major that their community college does not offer two years worth of courses that would transfer. But for other students, they see their time at a community college as the “first step” in their college education and want to transfer as quickly as possible. There are many benefits to earning an Associate degree. The following points are from four-year college transfer advisors; important information for students to consider if they are thinking about transferring early.

- Students who complete an approved Associate degree from a regionally accredited college will be granted junior status at most four-year colleges and universities. This typically means only two years would be left of full-time study to earn a Baccalaureate degree.
- Many four-year institutions will require high school transcripts and SAT/ACT scores for student with less than 45 credits. For students with a poor high school

background, successfully completing a degree would be a benefit because the four-year college would not base admission on high school performance.

- Some four-year colleges and universities will waive certain general education requirements if an Associate degree is completed.
- It is important to remember that with an Associate degree, students have earned a college degree! This could mean better employment opportunities while earning a Baccalaureate degree or if plans change – they still have a completed degree to list on their resume when applying for jobs in the workforce.
- If students have an Associate degree in New York state, the application fee is waived for up to 4 SUNY institutions! This means a possible savings of \$160.00!
- It is cost effective to stay and earn an Associate degree. If students are taking out student loans, this could mean paying back less money in the future.
- Typically courses with a grade of “C” or higher are transferable. Earning an Associate degree could help transfer courses with poor grades to a four-year institution. Schools may accept “D” grades if a

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**Earning an Associate Degree** *continued...*

completed degree is presented.

- Many four-year institutions offer scholarships to transfer students who earn an Associate degree.
- Students have a much better chance of earning a Baccalaureate degree if they have an Associate degree. Research shows that students who complete an Associate degree are more successful obtaining a Baccalaureate degree than students who transfer without a degree.
- Students with an Associate degree in New York state could be eligible for the SUNY guarantee program, which guarantees admission to a SUNY institution for Associate degree graduates. It was recently published in the Rochester, New York newspaper that it is becoming increasingly competitive to transfer within the SUNY system, making the Associate degree more valuable for this possible option.
- If students are undecided about their major, it is in their best interest to stay at their community college. Most four-year institutions do not have the variety in coursework to explore different options or special academic advisement programs for undeclared students.

Hopefully this information will assist you when helping a student decided the appropriate point in their education to transfer.

*Holly Wynn-Preische and Rebecca Mack, Monroe Community College, also contributed to this article.*

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**ACPA Convention**  
**March 18-22, 2006**

*For more information about the  
convention, please visit:*

**[www.myacpa.org](http://www.myacpa.org)**

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE  
IN THE LIVES OF  
STUDENTS!**

*See you in Indianapolis!*

## **COMMISSION EVENTS 2006**

### **COMMISSION FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE DIRECTORATE MEETING**

Building/Room: Marriott - Indiana Ballroom A

Date/Time: 3/19/06 09:30 AM - 04:00 PM

### **GATHERING FOR TWO-YEAR COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES**

Building/Room: Marriott - Front Entrance Area by Water Cooler

Date/Time: 3/19/06 04:00 PM - 04:15 PM

### **COMMISSION FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE OPEN MEETING**

Building/Room: Westin - Caucus

Date/Time: 3/21/06 04:15 PM - 05:30 PM

### **COMMISSION FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE RECEPTION**

Building/Room: Marriott - Columbus

Date/Time: 3/21/06 09:00 PM - 10:00 PM

## Commission Sponsored Programs Not to be Missed in Indy!

### **CAMPUS PROGRAMS FOR LEARNING IN LATER LIFE**

*In August of 2005, 31 directors and student leaders from learning-in-retirement programs, centers for lifelong learning, and other campus programs for older adult learners in Ohio met to discuss their programs' past, present, and future. This session will summarize topics addressed at that meeting. Participants will contribute by discussing additional programs, issues, implications, and recommendations for practice at all institutions, but particularly community colleges, as baby boomers retire during the next few years.*

Carolyn J. Palmer  
Bowling Green State University  
Convention Center - Sagamore Ballroom 7  
Tuesday, March 21, 8:45 AM - 10:00 AM

### **FROM FRUSTRATION TO FULFILLMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE UNDECIDED COLLEGE STUDENT**

*The overwhelming challenges involved in serving undecided college students can be frustrating for many professionals. This session will focus on eight specific competencies professionals need to make a difference in the education of these sometimes at risk students. Strategies that work for career development intervention will be shared. I will also provide participants with concrete ways to examine their current delivery methods of academic advising and career planning by sharing successful programs at our intuitions.*

Sally Barton Dingee  
Monroe Community College  
Convention Center - Room 116  
Monday, March 20, 10:15 AM - 11:30 AM

### **MAKE A DIFFERENCE—CAREERS IN TWO YEAR COLLEGES!**

*Looking for that innovative career that allows you to be on the cutting edge of new trends, creating programs and thinking outside the box? Consider a career with a two year college—it's the place to be in higher education! More than half of all students attending college are enrolled in two-year colleges. Four panelists with careers in two-year colleges will share their experiences and what keeps them excited and engaged in their work.*

Kari Kahler  
Northwestern Michigan College  
Convention Center - Room 104  
Monday, March 20, 11:45 AM - 1:00 PM

### **SECOND CALLINGS: STUDENT SERVICES FOR ADULTS IN TRANSITION**

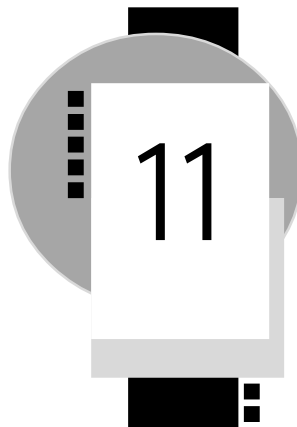
*This session will focus on career development, academic advising, counseling, and other student services designed to help adults in transition. These adults include midlife career changers, displaced workers, and those wishing to pursue second callings following retirement. They also include empty nesters and the recently divorced, widowed, relocated, disabled, etc. who are seeking renewed meaning and purpose in their lives. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do we need to assist them in their identification, exploration, and pursuit of new callings*

Carolyn J. Palmer  
Bowling Green State University  
Convention Center - Room 145  
Tuesday, March 21, 10:15 AM - 11:30 AM

### **SUPPORTING DISLOCATED WORKERS AND ADULT LEARNERS AT TWO-YEAR COLLEGES**

*Today, two-year colleges are making a difference for an increasingly diverse population — including midlife adult learners who are dislocated workers. This program reports findings about what is needed to improve dislocated workers' college adjustment; promote successful life transitions and development; and meet these learners' social support needs. Findings are shared from a large-scale study of 400 dislocated workers at Danville Community College, serving a town with 13% unemployment and 31% high school dropout. Participative conversation.*

Alan M Schwitzer  
Old Dominion University  
Convention Center - Wabash Ballroom 3  
Monday, March 20, 2:45 PM - 4:00 PM



# The Affects of Student Involvement on Transfer Rates from Community Colleges to Four-Year Institutions

By: *Patty Munsch, Suffolk Community College*

## Introduction

Community colleges serve as an integral component of higher education. It is considered the gateway to upward mobility and a mechanism to provide universal higher education (Cohen & Brawen, 2002). Community colleges serve a series of purposes including vocational training, continuing education, and providing a general education for students wishing to pursue a baccalaureate degree. The focus of this paper will be on the third purposed of community colleges; the goal of providing students the opportunity to transfer to four-year institutions. The current research shows that while this is a component of the mission of community colleges the reality shows that many students are not persisting to graduation at their community colleges nor are they transferring to earn a baccalaureate degree. Based on various research studies between 15% and 20% of students who plan to finish their Associates Degree and then transfer to a four-year institution for their bachelor's degree actually do so (Arthur M. Cohen & Brawen, 2002; McClenny, 2004). In order to insure that students are fulfilling their educational goals community colleges must provide the environment necessary for students to successfully transfer.

The purpose of this study is to examine factors that could increase transferring for community college students. One of the areas that may increase student transfer rates is student involvement. Student involvement is the theory developed by Alexander Astin that predicts the more energy and time a student spends on academic pursuits the higher the success rate of the student (Astin, 1993 and 1996). Astin's theory of student involvement has been studied at length regarding involvement and cognitive development, involvement and academic subject matter development, involvement and student development and involvement and persistence. The research has generally found the higher the level of involvement the stronger the student succeeds in all of the above areas. The area of community college student involvement and the student transfer rate has not been studied at length; however this is an area of research that could provide a foundation for increasing student transfer rates. By increasing student transfer rates community colleges would be increasing their attainment of their mission and goals.

## Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to provide background information and research to fully understand how student involvement may affect transfer rates of community college students. The literature review will begin with an explanation of the theory of student involvement and a definition of student involvement. The literature review will progress to develop an understanding of how student involvement affects cognitive

development and student learning. In addition it will review literature that connects student involvement with student development. From this broad scope the literature review will then narrow to discuss the connection between student involvement and student persistence. This is an important area of exploration because persistence measures the success of the student to complete their degree. This is connected to the importance of transferring which often involves the persistence and completion of an Associates degree and the commencement of a Bachelor degree. After adequately reviewing the literature of student involvement the literature review will then provide an overview of the role and mission of community colleges and provide information of involvement in community colleges. Finally, the literature review will describe the current research on community colleges and transfer rates. The goal of the literature review is to provide a strong understanding of both student involvement and the role of transfer process for community college students.

## Understanding Student Involvement

Student involvement is a very common term used among researchers in defining an area of research or to further understand potential outcomes of learning. The theory of student involvement and thus the term student involvement was developed by Alexander Astin. According to Astin "student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999 and 1996, p. 518). This developmental theory allows for student involvement to be defined by a series of actions including academic involvement, involvement with peers, and involvement with faculty. The theory of student involvement is composed of five postulates, each of which explains the theory in further detail. The first variable in the theory is the amount of energy the student invests in the physical and psychological objects. The objects include activities, tasks and people. The second postulate to the theory is that involvement takes place on a continuum. Students will invest a vary degree of energy on different objects. Third, involvement can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively providing ample means of measuring involvement. Fourth, the amount of learning and development that takes place directly correlates with the quality and quantity of student involvement. Finally, the effect of educational policies and practices directly relates to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement (Astin, 1999 and 1996).

The theory of student involvement is considered a learning theory. It is a theory that explains how students learn. There are a considerable number of other theories that explain how students learn including the theory of subject matter learning. According to this method, the student learns by acquiring information that is provided by the teacher usually through the form of lecture and

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**Affects of Student Involvement** *continued...*

reading. There is also the resource theory that explains that learning occurs when adequate resources are combined in one place. This theory incorporates the importance of providing quality physical and technological resources in combination with the most qualified faculty and best students. The third theory of learning that will be summarized is the individualized theory. According to this research, student learning cannot be encapsulated into one single approach and individualized learning must be met through the use of various teaching styles, physical lay out and various resources. The major difference between the above approaches to student learning and the theory of student involvement is that the theory of involvement focuses less on the role of the faculty or administration and more on what the student actual does (Astin, 1999 and 1996).

The theory of student involvement is one that is based on behavioral characteristics and the process that can best facilitate student learning. This theory is able to be measured by both direct observation and quantifiable data (Astin, 1999 and 1996). This allows for the theory to be used over time as a means of providing information on learning based on specific areas of involvement, specific populations of students, or specific institutions or types of institutions.

**Student Involvement and Student Learning**

The most recent research on student involvement and student learning was undertaken by Astin and reported in his text *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited*. This longitudinal research was performed in conjunction with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program or more commonly known as CIRP. The CIRP survey was given to freshman students in 309 four year institutions across the United States. Through the use of the CIRP, Astin was able to study possible outcome measures, self-predictions of college students and student personal characteristics. After four years Astin sent mailings to a random sample of students who had participated in the initial CIRP survey. He received 4,093 responses which constituted a 24.6% return rate. In addition, 159 institutions from the original 309 institutions also sent the students the follow up survey. Through this mailing 27,064 students responded and provided a 29.7% return rate (Astin, 1993, p. 29). After weighting the data to normalize the population Astin was able to provide the following data.

Astin studied various areas of student involvement and broke down his research and findings by these various areas. Academic involvement is considered the amount of time the student spends studying and engaging in academic coursework. Astin found that the more time students spent in academic involvement the increased likelihood that the student would persist and finish their degree. The student was also more likely to graduate with honors, have higher grade point averages, and enroll in graduate school. Astin also studied the affects of student involvement with faculty. This area of involvement included spending time with faculty during office hours, working on research with faculty, dining with faculty and socializing with faculty. Students who showed high levels of faculty interaction also showed an increase in the self-reported

growth of intellectual and personal development. The students also reported an increase in intellectual self esteem, an increase in social activism and leadership. Finally, Astin also reviewed the affects of peer involvement. This type of involvement is defined by time spent by students with their peers engaging in extracurricular activities, sports, governance, and residence. Those students who reported high levels of peer involvement also showed increase leadership skills, increase public speaking skills, higher interpersonal skills, stronger analytical and critical thinking skills and higher levels of cultural awareness (Astin, 1993). Upon Astin's completion of his research many others in the field of higher education used his theory of student involvement and researched specific areas of student involvement and their connection to various learning outcomes. The following paragraphs will review the more recent literature on student involvement and student learning specifically connected to what Astin considered peer involvement.

Student learning is the essential and key purpose of higher education. Therefore it is of the utmost importance to understand the affect of student involvement on student learning. As research has shown much of learning is socially based and students' co-curricular activities have important implications for what is learned in college (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). Out-of-classroom experience or peer involvement is defined as "structured and unstructured activities or conditions that are not directly part of an institutions form a course related instructional process" (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996, p. 149). In the review of literature by Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling, the authors found that peer interactions that involve either educational or intellectual activities are beneficial to the student and increase cognitive development.

In a study of non-classroom peer interaction researchers found a positive correlation between self-reported gains in writing and thinking skills and in understanding the arts and humanities across all three years of the study. The three year longitudinal research project studied student learning, student attitudes about learning, student cognitive development and student persistence. The study consisted of research data collected from 18 four-year institutions and 5 two-year institutions that are considered representative of higher education in the United States. The sample over the three years finished with 2,685 students completing the survey and academic test measures. The study also found that peer involvement also had a positive effect on standardized measures of reading comprehension, math, and critical thinking (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999). In addition, research has found a positive correlation between out-of-class peer interaction and results on standardized tests such as the Graduate Records Examine and the National Teachers Examine (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Similar research studies found an increase in cognitive development in students involved in student clubs and organizations (Inman &

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**Affects of Student Involvement** *continued...*

Pascarella, 1998; Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella, & Nora, 1995). In the Inman and Pascarella study students clubs and organizations positively influence end-of-first-year scores on standardized measures of critical thinking. The results show this effect was significant and other areas of confounding variables did not play a factor. While the classification of race as a variable in the effect of involvement on cognitive growth has not been studied in depth, one study did find a stronger increase in cognitive growth based on peer involvement of African American students. The study showed that there is a greater net difference between involved and uninvolved African American students than white students (Hoffman, 2002). In a meta-analysis of the research on the effect of student involvement, specifically co-curricular involvement, on critical thinking the research found, through the coding of 18 individual studies that there is .14 effect gain of critical thinking for students involved in cocurricular activities (Gellin, 2003). When divided by specific type of involvement the analysis found a .23 effect for living in residential life and a .11 effect for being active in a student club or organization.

However, the results of student peer involvement on standardized test scores are inconsistent. In a study similar to those listed above the researcher used the SAT as a pretest and reviewed the GRE scores of 2281 students who had achieved similar test scores on the SAT. After normalizing the data for confounding variables the research found that involvement in student clubs and organizations was negatively associated with verbal skill development (Anaya, 1996). Additionally, in a follow up study the researcher found that student peer involvement has a negative effect on the overall GRE score of students (Anaya, 1999).

While the research on the affect of peer involvement on standardized tests is inconsistent the research on self-reported gains is consistent and the results show a positive correlation between the two variables. In a longitudinal study of self-reported gains by students 18 four-year institutions and 5 two-year institutions were selected to randomly sample 5000 students over 4 years for the 4 year institutions and over two-years for the two-year institutions. At the completion of the fourth year 1,761 students or 65.6% completed the final survey. The research found that non-course related peer interaction had a “substantial net effect on gains in understanding art and humanities, understanding self and others, writing and thinking skills and gains in academic preparation for career” (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999, p. 70). The research also found that the more the students were involved in peer involvement that was both course related and non-course related the greater their cognitive growth. This research further proves Astin’s postulate that student involvement occurs over a continuum with the greatest gains occurring from the strongest levels of quality and quantity of involvement. A second interesting find in this research study was the finding that the non-course related peer involvement, when controlled for residential living, showed no change in the net effect for growth in cognitive development. Thus showing that involvement in two-year colleges are equally meaningful, although found through

different means, as their four-year counterpart institutions. Overall this influential study found that peer involvement has a broad range positive affect on self-reported cognitive growth.

All of the research reviewed thus far is quantitative studies; however qualitative studies have also been used to show the connection between peer involvement and intellectual development. An institutional study of 101 students who self-identified as being involved in campus life was conducted to try to understand “how do students describe the impact of the cocurricular experiences on their intellectual development” (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 203). The study gauged the students’ way of knowing in three stages; absolute, transitional and independent. The interviews with the students were conducted over four years and the transcriptions coded to find the patterns of data. The study found that students were able to identify experiences through cocurricular involvement that translated into their ability to move through the various stages of knowing and increased their intellectual capacity (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Overall, the study found an increase in their epistemological sophistication and reasoning skills based on their involvement in student clubs and organizations (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

**Student Involvement and Student Persistence**

The most commonly used theory of student persistence within student affairs is Tinto’s Interactionalist model of student departure (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This theory provides a behavioral and perceptual framework of why students do or do not persist. The theory contains the following attributes which Tinto believes will either support or hinder student persistence. The first is the pre-entry attributes of the student including demographic information, and socioeconomic status. The second is the goals and commitment of the student prior to entering college. This includes expectations of college, motivation to attend college, congruence of pre-college goals and institutional resources. The third attribute to student persistence is their experiences with the institution. This attribute takes into account the fulfillment of student expectations, the support provided by student services, within classroom experiences, and a values matching of student beliefs and institutional ethos. The fourth attribute is the integration of the student in the college. This integration can be described as Astin’s definition of student involvement. The amount of energy a student expends on academic life, peers, and cocurricular activities (Astin, 1999 and 1996). The fifth attribute is the goals and the commitment of the student while they are attending college. This attribute includes the congruence of the institutional offerings and a students personal goals and the amount time and energy a student is spending on academic pursuits (Tinto, 1975, , 1993).

Tinto began this model and theory in his original work in 1975 but revised the work in 1993 to be inclusive of psychological, societal, economic, organizational and interaction factors (Metz, 2004). This shift in and addition to the theory shows the vast complexity that surrounds the concept of student persistence. In the revised theory Tinto also accounts for behavioral measures such as a students

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**Affects of Student Involvement** *continued...*

psychological state, the role of financial aid, the massification of higher education, and the competing interests of students' time (Metz, 2004; Tinto, 1993). In addition to Tinto's work in this area Bean has also provided valuable insight into behavioral affects of student persistence. Bean builds on Tinto's theory but also expands the work to further understand and account for students who are nontraditional age, commuters or in some manner not "typical" of the demographics of undergraduate students. Bean adds that academic variables, student intent, expectations and external and internal environmental factors also affect student persistence (Bean, 1980; Metz, 2004). While an entire review of literature could be focused on the evolution of the theory of student persistence this paper will conclude with the understanding that the theory in total "suggests a socialization process whereby students who become successfully socialized are more likely to persist" (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 643). It is this single attribute that connects student involvement with student persistence and the research described below will exemplify this specific connotation.

In a representative longitudinal study at a single institution 1,061 students participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey in September of the academic year. In the following months 68% participated in the Early Collegiate Experience Survey and the Freshman Year Survey. The data collected from the three surveys show that involvement defined as peer involvement and faculty involvement have a positive effect on student persistence. Additionally, the study focused on the importance of early involvement and proved that "early involvement in the fall semester positively predicts spring involvement and has significant indirect effects on social integration, academic integration institutional commitment and persistence" (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 656). In addition their research shows that students who are noninvolved in their fall semester stay uninvolved in their spring semester. They are also less likely to view either peers or the institution as supportive and they are less likely to persist to their sophomore year (Berger & Milem, 1999). A second study also found that students who become involved in their first semester are likely to stay involved and those students who do not become involved in their first semester also stay uninvolved (Pascarella et al., 1996).

A plethora of research has been conducted on the connection between student involvement and student persistence and the studies conclusively exhibit that the increase level of student involvement increases the students' persistence (Allen & Nora, 1995; Bray, Braxton, & Sullivan, 1999; Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993). While all of the research proved the positive correlation between student involvement and persistence it also showed this connection to remain in urban campuses, commuter campuses, and residential campuses. "The level of student involvement and integration in any of the components of an institution's academic and social systems can be a critical factor in students' persistence decisions" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 426). The challenge however, within

the research is whether the involvement has a direct or indirect effect on student persistence. At this point in time the research is inconclusive on the means of the affect however the studies all show the positive correlation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

In addition to the above research Tinto has also performed research on his theory of persistence particularly in response to the attrition rates at community colleges. The research sampled students from Seattle Central Community College with one population in the Coordinated Studies Program and the other population regular matriculated students. The population of students in the Coordinated Studies Program was provided with a block schedule of classes so that students took between four and six classes as a cohort. In addition, the faculty focused on cooperative learning, working in groups and used the model of a shared classroom to allow for an integration of the course material. The sample was a part of a mixed methods longitudinal study. Initially both populations received surveys one was administered during the first week of the fall semester; the second was administered on the last week of the fall semester. The total number of students that participated was 287 with 121 from the Coordinated Studies Program and 166 from the general student population. In addition to the quantitative data that was collected follow-up qualitative measures were also administered. The qualitative data included participant observations of the Coordinated Studies Program, document review, and interviews with students and faculty. The results of the study showed that the coordinated studies students had higher perceptions of their classes, their involvement and overall satisfaction with the institution. The students in the program also had higher persistence rates and higher transfer rates than the general students. Interestingly, the qualitative interviews shows that students often related to the social conditions that were created by the cohort method (Tinto, 1997). Students consistently referred to their peer involvement as a strong indicator of their integration into the institution. This study exhibits two important points. The first is that there can and is a strong correlation between peer involvement and community college student persistence. The second point is that often peer involvement is assumed to be co-curricular in nature and occurring outside of the classroom. This study debunks that myth and provides for a new area of research and potential practical application for increasing retention rates at community colleges.

**Student Involvement and Community Colleges**

There have also been other forms of student involvement in the community colleges that have proven statistically to provide further academic success for students. The first of these programs is new student orientation courses. Longitudinal research found that the extended orientation course increased students successful completion of their first term from 56% to 81% (Brawer & Cohen, 1996). The same students were also 65% more likely to successful complete four semesters. In related research a freshman orientation or freshman seminar course found that those students who completed the course completed 50% more courses than those students who did not take the course (Brawer & Cohen, 1996).

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**Affects of Student Involvement** *continued...*

As was discussed earlier learning communities can also have a strong impact on peer involvement. Tinto found through his recent research that students connected to a cohort through their learning communities demonstrated higher levels of peer involvement (Tinto, 1997). In related research Learning Assistance Centers were found to increase a students' sense of community. The study demonstrated that students who utilized the Learning Assistance Centers on campus felt a stronger sense of involvement and the community while also increasing their academic achievement (Chaves, 2003). Overall, community colleges face many challenges when trying to involve the student in their academic experience. However, the research has shown that strong levels of involvement can be achieved through creative and new means. These important findings demonstrate that community colleges can utilize the same theories of involvement and persistence when creating their college environment.

**Community Colleges and Persistence**

A final challenge to community colleges that will be discussed in this section is the concept of the "cooling out process" (Brawer & Cohen, 1996). This concept is based on research that shows that students who begin their educational pursuits at a community college are less likely to complete a baccalaureate degree than their counterparts at four-year institutions (Brawer & Cohen, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This data has not been consistent and in Surette's research found that there is no significant difference in degree attainment when controlled for confounding variables (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In other research 1,645 students were sampled over a two-year time span. The research included academic assessment tests, and the College Student Experience Questionnaire. At the onset of the study all students indicated their educational goal included earning a baccalaureate degree. The research found in both the weighted sample and the un-weighted sample that the students in the community college were more likely to lower their educational aspirations than their four-year counterparts. The weighted research found a 20% differential between the two groups, with community college students being 20% more likely to lower their expectations. In the un-weighted results the community college students were 31% more likely to lower their expectations (Pascarella, Edison, Amaury, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1998). The causes for this "cooling out" has been hypothesized by many research and practioners and thoughts include economics, state policies, a lack of understanding of degrees by students and many others (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The last section of this paper will further review the literature related to student transfer rates from community colleges to four-year institutions and look to find if student involvement positively correlates to transfer rates.

Researchers agree that transferring is the process by which a student, who first took college classes at a community college, shifts to taking classes at a four-year institution. However, this simple explanation allows for various methodologies and differences when determining the rate of transfer. In a research study of the methodological variations of defining the transfer

rate, it was found that using the same institution the transfer rate can shift from 5% to 85% based on who at the institution is considered transfer ready (Bradburn & Hurst, 2001). The research discovered by restricting or redefining the term transfer to a more restrictive group of students the higher the transfer rate of the intuitions. The researcher suggests that a potential transfer student should be defined as individual perusing academic major and taking classes towards a bachelor degree. Through the use of this highly classified definition the national average community college transfer rate would shift from 20% to 65% (Bradburn & Hurst, 2001). However the questions of a consistent term for the research of transfer rates still remain.

In addition to the above definition Cohen also believes that a consistent term for transfer rate research must be implemented in order to best understand the reality of the community colleges and to collect consistent data in order to better understand shifts, trends, effects, and outcomes. Cohen believes the transfer rate research definition should including all students who have no prior college experience, who complete at least 12 credits. This number of students should be divided into the number of that group who take one or more classes at the university within four years (A. M Cohen, 1993). Despite all of the definitions of transfer rates and the request that a consistent term be used universally, the problem has yet to be resolved. As the research on transfer rates continues to be discussed keep in mind that the use of the term transfer is still volatile and each piece of research needs to be reviewed independently.

The role of the community college in the transfer process has been studied at length and various and research has found different attributes of the community college that can increase transfer rates. In one review of this specific literature the author found the following factors to increase the transfer rates. If the community college established articulation agreements with the four-year institutions in the area then transfer rates increase. When the community college provides the students with a liberal arts or general education major the transfer rates increase. In community colleges where the students have the opportunity to work directly with counselors on applying to four-year institutions the transfer rate increases. Community colleges that mandate new student orientation have increased transfer rates. Schools that provide a transfer resource room also have increase transfer rates. Finally institutions that see the transfer process as a part of the institutions' missions and goals have higher transfer rates (Garza, 1998).

In addition to the studies that have been undertaken to understand institutional factors related to student transfer, research has also been executed to understand the personal factors related to student transfer. Researchers completed a qualitative study of 102 traditional-aged transfer students to best understand the various factors that led the student to transfer. The results found a variety of characteristics of the student. The students interviewed discussed the importance of the role of faculty at their community college in providing the students with the academic self-esteem to realize they had the intellectual capacity to earn a baccalaureate

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**Affects of Student Involvement** *continued...*

degree. The students mention working with faculty in student clubs, outside of class and through multiple courses. Secondly, the students mentioned the importance of peers on their transfer process. The students interviewed mentioned the names of specific students from the community college that were considered the student leaders of the community college. The students interviewed pointed to the importance of emulating the student leaders who planned to transfer. The final area of student personal characteristics that affect the transfer rate was the role and importance of family support. The students who had successfully transferred referred to the emotional support provided by their families as a key factor in their decision to transfer (Cejda & Kaylor, 2001).

Research has also examined the changes of student behavior patterns after they transfer. In a recent study 392 students from within a random sample of students who had transferred from a community college to four-year institutions were surveyed via the phone. The results found that after a student successfully transfers the student is more likely to socialize with their peers and they devote more time to studies. In addition the students decrease the amount of time they spend working off-campus and they spend less time on family commitments (Berger & Malaney, 2001). The research also reported that students with higher grade point averages at their four-year institutions had higher satisfaction ratings with the four-year institution and the transfer process. Finally, the research found that those students who had prepared themselves to transfer and were involved in the university showed the highest level of overall satisfaction (Berger & Malaney, 2001).

In two related studies researchers examined what affect the community college has on the adjustment of students from community colleges to four-year institutions. One of the research studies used a quantitative approach using the Community College Student Experience Questionnaire and the second used qualitative approach interviewing students on their transfer experience. Both studies found similar results; students have a higher satisfaction and higher grade point averages when the community college provides transition resources for the students. The students pointed to four main areas of concerns in the transferring processes

including academic advising, social integration, general information and personal adjustment. The two leading concerns for students in both studies were academic advising and social integration. The students pointed to the importance of working with transfer counselors from the community college. In the qualitative study students interviewed discussed the role of advocate that the transfer counselor played for the student. The students suggested that the transfer counseling eased the entire transition from the application process to the transferring of credit. In addition, the students pointed to their peer group and social network from the community college as a means of adjusting, modifying, or expanding their social network at their four-year institution. Students who had high peer interaction while attending their community college showed an easier transition into new social networks at their four-year institution (Swigart, 2000; Brit and Hirt 1999).

As the literature has shown much time, effort and energy has been spent on understanding the causes of successful transfer of students from community colleges to baccalaureate institutions. However, it is detrimental to understand why the transfer process is important overall within higher education. As Eaton (2001) points out there are three main components to the need to transfer students. The first is the area she describes as social justice. The literature points out that the demographic composition of community colleges includes lower socioeconomic students, minority students and first generation college students (Eaton, 2001). In order to increase social justice, class equity and provide students with equal opportunities to higher education the community college must provide an education opportunity that has the mobility to provide a full range of academic pursuits. Secondly, the role of transferring students provides the community college with the opportunity to establish collegiate relationships with the four-year institutions. By working with four-year institutions on curriculum development, learning outcomes and the transfer process community colleges have an opportunity to prove their academic integrity. Finally, the transfer process is important to students and community colleges as the need for lifelong learning increases. Students expect to continue their education throughout their lifetime in order to advance economically. Community colleges need to provide the opening of this lifelong learning by insuring that students clearly understand and incorporate the process of transferring into their future goals (Eaton, 2001).

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