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**AN EVALUATION OF A STUDENT ORIENTATION PILOT PROJECT
AND COUNSELING SERVICES AS RETENTION ACTIVITIES AT
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY**

by
Mary T. Gustas

**A Project Report
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Specialist in Education
Department of Educational Leadership**

**Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1988**

AN EVALUATION OF A STUDENT ORIENTATION PILOT PROJECT
AND COUNSELING SERVICES AS RETENTION ACTIVITIES AT
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Mary T. Gustas, Ed.S.

Western Michigan University, 1988

The field experience was completed in the Counseling Center in affiliation with the Dean of Students Office, and the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, spring of 1986 through spring of 1987. The emphasis of the experience was to become familiar with the managerial perspective of student services offices as they relate to the retention of students in a four year college environment. An objective of the experience was to determine if an increased orientation program and counseling service impacted the retention of freshmen students at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI.

Data were gathered and compiled which supported an extended orientation program at other institutions. Recommendations for implementation were prepared and presented to the Retention Committee at Grand Valley State University.

Additional data collection was done for the Counseling Center, Grand Valley State University, to determine the impact of this student service on student retention.

Concerns with the data collection process in this project were presented to the field supervisor and recommendations for future data collection and evaluations were prepared.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks is in order for my field experience supervisor, Dr. Diana Pace, Director of the Counseling Center at Grand Valley State University. Without her constant support and encouragement, the accomplishment of this project would have been very difficult. Her insight and friendship made this a very enjoyable experience.

I would also like to thank the staff and administrators at Grand Valley State University who worked with me in this project, and for giving me an opportunity to expand my knowledge of institutions and managerial styles.

Mary T. Gustas

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CHAPTER I

RATIONALE FOR FIELD EXPERIENCE

Introduction

The utilization of Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI, as a field experience site, was based on the convenience of the location and the interest of the institution and myself in student retention factors for four year colleges. My familiarity with the institution aided in developing communication resources and securing information.

Grand Valley State University is a medium sized, state university, with an approximate enrollment of 8,500, serving the metropolitan area of Grand Rapids and the surrounding tri-county area, which includes the counties of Muskegon, Kent and Ottawa.

My prior experience in higher education, 1978 - 1981, was related to a small private Catholic college located in the Southwest. During that period of time, I was involved in the development of an extended orientation program and developed the initial retention studies at that college.

The Grand Valley field experience provided me with an excellent opportunity to expand my knowledge of orientation programs and the impact and importance of retention in a state funded institution. Much of the information that I secured may be applied to other two and four year institutions.

The impact of retention and orientation on an institution of higher education is of major concern for individuals intending to pursue administrative positions in a post-secondary academic institution. The National Orientation Directors Association (Zarvell, 1984) reported that student dropout rate after the first year in state and private institutions is 30-35%. This high attrition rate reflects the importance of orientation programs which may be used to address the retention problem.

Areas of involvement during the field experience included student services and academic offices existing at Grand Valley State University.

The field experience presented opportunities to meet the directors and deans in various offices and divisions throughout the campus, who are involved in the planning and development of orientation and retention programs at Grand Valley State University. This exposure allowed exchange of various administrative perspectives and expansion of my understanding of the academic hierarchy existing within an institution of higher education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The purpose of this section is to analyze selected literature and relevant research in the areas of attrition, retention and orientation. Examination of the literature revealed numerous suggestions about intervention and improving retention through the use of orientation practices. The information in this chapter will primarily reflect concepts developed regarding general student populations. The relevancy of the information is evident in the recommendations and evaluations made throughout the field experience.

Lenning, Beal, and Sauer (1980) and Beal and Noel (1980), as well as many additional references, were reviewed for recommendations on student services and academic programs through which retention could be enhanced.

According to Tinto's model (1975), the greater the degree of integration into the institution the greater the student's commitment will be to the college or university and the goal of completing the degree. The Tinto (1975) report reviewed six studies which supported his model and the dynamics of attrition with social and academic integration. Similar findings are reflected by Bean (1980), who indicates that institutional commitment is a primary variable related to retention. Bean also presented perceived quality of education as an important variable. Beal and Noel (1980) presented institutional assistance

programs as being successful in improving student retention.

Individuals enter institutions of higher education with a variety of attributes (e.g., sex, race, ability), pre-college experience (e.g., grade point averages, academic and social attainments), family backgrounds, (e.g., social status, and value climates) each of which has direct effects upon performance in college (Tinto, 1975).

According to Upcraft, Finney, and Garland (1984), a college influences new students in two fundamental ways: through the kinds of students it admits and through the influence it exerts upon the students' enrollment. If an institution is interested in maintaining its entering students, it must consider the student body characteristics and backgrounds.

Orientation is an effort on the part of a college or university to help entering students make a transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment (Upcraft, 1984). The orientation program may accomplish a myriad of institutional objectives, one of which includes the improvement of student retention (Zarvell, 1984).

Definitions

Retention: Among the students who originally plan to complete their academic program the reasons for dropping out are complex and overlapping (Astin, 1975; Cope, 1978; Tinto, 1975). Retention may be defined as that which occurs when students complete, continue, or resume their studies (Lenning et al., 1980). Noel (1978) reports that retention is a by-product of the institution's concerted effort to create a staying environment in which students can discover and develop their

talents to the fullest extent.

Attrition: Attrition occurs when students are no longer enrolled in a college or university (Lenning et al., 1980). Student attrition is defined as the cessation of individual student membership in an institution of higher education (Beal, 1980).

Tinto (1975) postulated that attrition occurs when the student no longer is socially integrated with other members of the college community and when the student no longer holds the dominant values reflected in the institutions functioning.

Research

A number of studies have related student characteristics to attrition and retention, and the consensus of most previous reviewers has been that the results have been inconsistent except for a few student variables (Lenning et al., 1980). A common conclusion has been that retention and attrition result from the interaction between persons and institutions; to understand the retention situation one should develop an understanding of these interactions (Lenning et al., 1980).

In 1982, an American College Testing Program (ACT) study examining retention by type of institution reported a 30-35% student dropout rate after the first year for state and private institutions. This high attrition rate underscores the need for an orientation approach which addresses the issue of attrition. The contribution of orientation programs to institutional retention has been identified in major studies conducted at Southwestern Louisiana State University at Lafayette, The University of Texas at Arlington, and at Bradley

University, Peoria, IL. (Zarvell, 1984).

The benefits of addressing retention in orientation has been identified by the National Orientation Directors Association (Zarvell, 1984) in two ways: (1) The student is educated regarding some problems he/she may encounter in the first year of college and thereby can take the necessary steps to address those problems, and (2) It can identify some problems for both the school and the student that may be encountered in the first year in order to take preventative action.

The American College Testing Program (ACT, 1982) recently conducted studies in the area of attrition and retention. These studies identified new "themes" in attrition at educational institutions. Most significant with regard to the orientation process are: (a) academic boredom, (b) academic under-preparation, (c) uncertainty regarding major or career choice, (d) transition and adjustment difficulties, (e) dissonance or incompatibility, and (f) irrelevancy of education (Zarvell, 1984, p. 36).

Upcraft (1984) indicates that orientation programs must be evaluated to determine if the program and services meet the goals established by the institution. There must be a demonstrable relationship between participation in orientation activities and entering students' academic achievement, retention, and personal development. There is some evidence that participation in orientation activities can result in better academic achievement and higher retention than non-participation by the new student (Upcraft, 1984).

A programmatic effort by the institution in the direction toward extended orientation programs, not only benefits

students but also serves the institution's need to retain its students (Cohen & Jody, 1978).

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF FIELD EXPERIENCE

Introduction

This report describes the field experience completed at Grand Valley State University, in conjunction with the Counseling Center, Dean of Students Office, Academic Resource Center, and the Vice President of Academic Affairs Office, from spring 1986 through spring 1987.

The field experience and guidelines were initially established with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Unfortunately, poor timing and illness resulted in a delay and the need for reassignment of the experience to the Counseling Center, in conjunction with the Dean of Students Office and the Academic Resource Center.

The results underscored the need for and importance of retention efforts for the institution and identified recommendations for future considerations.

The University had been involved in some retention studies for the past 10 years; however, it had not developed any program specifically oriented toward the improvement of retention. Simultaneous with my field experience, the institution established the plan for an extended orientation program. This program was to serve as a pilot project in the development of a new orientation emphasis.

The new program required an evaluation tool and the committee responsible for the development of the program needed a literature review to determine existing programs and recommendations.

The final stage of the field experience involved the continuation of specific factors as they relate to retention at the University. A follow-up study was designed to evaluate the impact the Counseling Center services had on freshmen student retention, from Fall 1984 to Fall 1985. These years were selected because of the complete institutional data available for comparison to the counseling office data.

Summary of Log

Week of January 8, 1986

The week of January 8 began the initial planning session with the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs. A mutual decision was made that the experience would not be one that would result in my becoming an assistant to him, rather it was to be an independent position with special projects assigned and coordinated with him.

The projects assigned would be designed to provide information needed to assist in decision making and evaluation at Grand Valley State University.

The first two projects assigned were:

1. Prepare a proposal statement on the organization and academic structure for the new downtown center. If this project were accepted by the Provost, further development would be required to recommend direction in the areas of electronic/

computer enhancements, educational services and student services.

2. Prepare a problem statement and proposal regarding retention. Because of my previous background and interest, it appeared as though this would become my project area emphasis. The Associate Vice President consistently returned to this area in our discussions.

A time line was established for the completion of the two projects. The first proposal would be prepared for him by the second week of the field experience. The second proposal would be provided the third week.

Week of January 16, 1986

At this meeting the following information was presented for further consideration:

Proposal for the Downtown Center Grand Valley State University

Problem Statement:

Grand Valley State University is in the process of building a new downtown campus center. Because of its location it will be necessary for an organizational structure to be developed unique to the services it provides which is complementary to the pre-existing organizational structures on the main campus.

Response:

Anderson, Bowman, and Tinto (1972) identify the existence and development of centers as complements to departments. These centers exist because they satisfy particular requirements more efficiently and effectively than the department.

Centers are clearly linked to the central purpose of the college or university and are not simply a portion of a support system. Often a center is responsible for accomplishing a particular task or mission.

Four variables appear to be significant in determining

the character of a center's structure: (1) Its relationship to the college or university's overall mission, (2) Its degree of autonomy, (3) The nature of its accountability, and (4) Its source of funding (Anderson et al., 1972).

In order to determine a recommended organizational structure, it is necessary to define the tasks which will be performed by the center. After the tasks have been defined, the resources required to perform these tasks must then be identified. From this information an organizational model may be developed.

The current organizational structure of Grand Valley State University provides the dean level as a structural division within the institution. It is projected that this level would provide the best avenue for communication within the existing management structure.

The implementation of this project would be dependant upon the Provost and in conjunction with the second proposal scheduled to be presented the following week.

Week of January 24, 1986

The second proposal on retention was presented during this meeting.

Retention Considerations Grand Valley State University

Problem Statement:

What considerations regarding retention rates must be reviewed, in order to develop action plans which will address these concerns.

Response:

During the 1980's more than fifteen million men and women will enter nearly three thousand colleges and universities. Because most of the evidence from national retention studies conducted over more than four decades yields surprisingly consistent results, it can be expected that five or six million of these students will never earn degrees. (Cope, 1978, p.1)

This statement reflects the negative impact attrition has on higher education administrators.

Over the past five years, there has been an increased concern regarding the cost of attrition and the importance of retention. "From the institutions' perspective, improving retention--reducing attrition--is one way to combat declining enrollments and accompanying decreases in funding, that now threaten so many colleges and universities." (Lenning et al., 1980, p.4)

The problem of dropouts and retention has been the theme of extensive research in higher education. Tinto (1982) indicates that the overall rate of completion (55%) versus dropout (45%) has remained strikingly constant over the past 100 years. This has been true despite drastic changes during that time, both in the character of higher education and in the number and types of students participating.

Ewell (1984) indicates that the first step in constructing a successful student retention program is research. The institution must discover: (a) The extent of its retention problem, (b) The particular student population in which the problem occurs, and (c) The reasons why the problem occurs.

Defining Attrition/Retention

In a study by Lenning et al. (1980), four characteristics which relate to attrition and retention factors were identified. Those variables are: (1) student characteristics, (2) environmental characteristics, (3) institutional characteristics, and (4) interactions between the student and the institution.

Research conducted on student retention indicates that many variables are linked to the circumstances of a particular institution and its student body (Beal & Noel 1980).

At the simplest level, attrition can be described as all withdrawals from an institution without having completed a program. Attrition is often identified with the problem which caused its occurrence.

Ewell (1984) identified three problem areas associated with attrition: (1) unit-of-analysis problem: withdrawal from a particular course, program, institution or education-at-large, (2) stop-out problem: patterns of enrollment which involve not attending college for one or more terms, and (3) goal-fulfillment problem: the withdrawal from a college because the individual has attained their educational goals or discover that the institution is not helping them meet their goals.

Tinto (1982) identified the maturity level of the student or the impact of the college experience as possible causes of attrition.

The development of a retention study or action plan to address this concern within the institution requires the back-

ground research mentioned briefly. Specific identification of Grand Valley State University's student body and attrition patterns will provide the basis for further planning.

Month of September 1986

Because of illness on the part of the Associate Vice President, and additional work assignments required of me, I was unable to continue my field experience until September. At this time a reassignment occurred which placed me with the Counseling Center at Grand Valley State University. This assignment was to develop an evaluation tool for the pilot orientation program and to make recommendations for developmental considerations.

The first meeting with the Director of the Counseling Center provided me with an outline of the class, the material which was to be covered, the number of students participating, number of sessions, and days the sessions were to meet. Seventy-eight students were invited to participate in the program. This group was divided into six smaller groups. Three of these groups would be team taught, and three would be taught by only one instructor. Each group would meet at different times and days of the week.

The first assignment based on this information was to develop a questionnaire for the students. As I began to develop this questionnaire, it became evident that an evaluation tool should also be made available for the instructors/presenters.

Three drafts and several meetings throughout the month of September resulted in the final draft of both the student evaluation and the staff/faculty evaluation. (See Appendices A and B)

The freshmen seminar concept at Grand Valley State University was developed a few weeks prior to the Fall semester 1986, by a discussion group composed of the Dean of Students, the Dean of Academic Services, the Director of the Counseling Center, and the Director of the Academic Resource Center. The impetus for the program was a result of their interest and concern for student retention. A decision was made to initiate a pilot program that may aid in alleviating the problem.

The initial plan was to model the program after an extended orientation program currently presented at University of South Carolina at Columbia. This particular program has been in existence since 1972 and has developed its own text. This text was to be used for the pilot program at Grand Valley.

The program was coordinated through the Counseling Center and the presenters were composed of staff and faculty who had agreed to participate in the program.

Seventy-eight students were invited to participate in the program. This group was divided into six smaller groups: one commuter class, two honors classes, and three residence hall classes. A total of thirty-six students actually participated in the pilot.

Each of the groups met at different times and days of the week. The groups met one day a week, Monday through Friday at times ranging from 2:00 pm to 5:30pm.

Three of the six groups were presented by a team of two, the remaining three groups were taught by one individual. See Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of Pilot Groups

<u>Instructors</u>	<u># of students</u>	<u># of sessions</u>
Jellema	5	12 (commuters)
Mayberry	6	12 (honors)
Seeger	8	8 (honors)
Pace/Koch	6	6 (res.hall)
Devlin/Sullivan	6	7 (res.hall)
Miko/Jones	5	8 (res.hall)
Average group size	6/36	
Average # of sessions		8.8

Each of the presenters independently determined his/her style for the presentations, and selected the information he/she provided to the students.

The text College is Only the Beginning (Gardner & Jewler, 1985) was not used by all the groups. Some of the groups used it as a reference, and others did not use the book at all.

An evaluation tool was developed for the presenters and the students in order to secure immediate feedback from the participants. (See Appendix A & B)

Because the class would not be completed until the end of October, a literature review on other orientation programs began.

Month of October 1986

During the month of October, I met with the Director of the Counseling Center to obtain the surveys and discuss how the information should be presented. The evaluations for the presenters had been provided at the final review meeting October 25, 1986. The students, who had been invited to participate in the orientation, were sent the evaluation form by first class mail and provided postage paid return envelopes.

The next assignment was to compile the results of the evaluation forms from both the student participants and the instructors.

Month of November 1986

Discussions with the Director of the Counseling Center indicated that the evaluations might not be valid or valuable for future planning. Unfortunately, the participation by students was poor, and program content was inconsistent with the initial planning. However, the decision was made to continue the evaluation process and provide the administration with whatever information was obtained.

The month of November required the compilation of the results and the completion of the literature review. The results of the evaluations were presented in a narrative format. (See Appendix C) The literature review was prepared to accompany the results of the evaluations.

Month of December 1986

December completed the evaluation process and literature review. On December 10, 1986, the results of this process were

presented to the Retention Committee. Included with this information were recommendations for future planning based on the information secured from the literature review.

The Retention Committee had already determined that an extended orientation program would be implemented, and planning had already begun. There was no indication that the information provided would be used for planning of the program.

Concerns presented by the Retention Committee were related to the short-term and long-term impact of the pilot program on the students who participated. The committee wanted to know the impact the program had on the participating students' mid-term grades and end of the semester grades. Both the Director of the Counseling Center and I indicated that this type of follow-up would not be beneficial since continuity in program content was absent and significant data could not be gathered.

The discussion of a follow-up for this pilot project resulted in the next assignment. After discussing the idea with the Director of the Counseling Center, we decided to do a follow-up study of students who had used the services provided by the Counseling Center, and determine whether that service had any significant impact on the retention rate.

Month of January 1987

The month of January was used for the initial planning of the follow-up study. Investigation would be required to identify the retention data that were available for the institution and in what format it was available. This information would be needed before any comparison report could be

prepared.

The students selected for evaluation were first time in any college, freshmen, beginning Fall 1984. These selection criteria were based on data which could be secured from the Office of Institutional Analysis, Grand Valley State University. This particular year was the most complete and provided the greatest number of variables.

A list of 119 students was compiled from the records at the Counseling Center. These students had identified themselves as freshmen, and had used the services provided at the Counseling Center. The students may have received personal counseling or secured information on career counseling. No distinction was made for the services received.

Month of February 1987

The students who had been selected, based on the above criteria, were then reviewed for their academic progress from Fall 1984 to Fall 1985. The students' grade point average was calculated for each semester from Fall 1984 through Fall 1985, and the distribution was determined based on these calculations.

Upon the completion of this data collection, a comparison was made with the information obtained from the Office of Institutional Analysis: Retention of New Fall 1984 Undergraduate Degree Seeking Students (Fall 1984 to Winter 1985) (Tweedale, 1985b) and Retention of New Fall 1984 Undergraduate Degree Seeking Students Fall 1984 to Fall 1985 (Tweedale, 1985a). (See Appendix D)

An evaluation of the comparison indicated no significant

retention difference for freshmen students who used the Counseling Center services with the general population of the institution.

Conclusion

The field experience gave me an administrative perspective on the institutions' recognition and response to problems in student development and organizational structures. At the time of the experience I did not recognize how this perspective would benefit the development of my administrative concepts.

I became aware of the importance of the student services provided on a college campus, and their actual and potential impact upon student retention. The literature review and development of evaluation tools provided an exciting use of my personal experience and academic program.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The primary purpose of the field experience was to provide an opportunity to participate in retention activities and gain a broader perspective on higher education administration. A major goal of the experience was to aid in the developing of retention activities at Grand Valley State University.

A second goal was to expand my knowledge of student services and how these services relate to the retention perspective.

Summary

The goals were accomplished; however, I do not believe the information and data collected was used by the Retention Committee to the extent that it might have been for planning and future development of retention efforts at the institution.

Recommendations resulting from the field experience follow.

Recommendations and Guidelines

First, the extended orientation program should be reviewed and evaluated based on the specific needs of the institution. Precise timetables and goals should be established

prior to the implementation of the program. The goals should include a formal evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Second, upon completion of the above stated process, further planning and re-evaluation of the program should be done prior to the continuation of the program.

Third, in the event long-term effects wish to be evaluated, these factors should be identified early. This identification will allow for proper data collection and the potential for more accurate reporting.

The following guidelines have been developed based on a literature review on orientation programs and evaluation. This information may be beneficial in developing the extended Freshmen Seminar at Grand Valley State University. It is recommended that the guidelines be used for planning and implementing this program.

Orientation is an effort on the part of an institution to help its entering students make a transition into the collegiate environment and increase their success in college. The traditional freshman orientation has consisted of a day or week-long introduction to the college. According to Cohen and Jody (1978), this type of orientation is inadequate for helping students to learn about the college system and how to deal with it.

New students need help in becoming active participants in the educational process. The new student needs assistance in gaining information about the rules and resources of the college. In addition to this information they also need to develop skills in various areas such as: (a) note-taking, (b)

test-taking, and (c) class participation.

The Committee on the Student in Higher Education (1968) determined three basic needs for the majority of students entering a college or university. First, each student needs to acquire a positive and realistic conception of his/her own abilities in the world of higher education. Second, he/she needs to reach the point of being able to see the structure and interrelations of knowledge. Third, he/she needs to see the relevance of higher education to his/her own life. Students enter a college or university eager to address these needs; however, their expectations and performance usually decline very rapidly during the first months of their freshman year.

The orientation program should be related to the central mission and goal of the college or university. Orientation programs are a major component in addressing the diversity of the college or university environment and responding to the students' needs. An orientation program should respond to the overall philosophy of the institution by providing programs that are concerned with the total development of the student.

If an institution is committed to helping its entering students make a successful transition into the college or university environment, it must consider the characteristics and backgrounds of the students it admits; institutional characteristics; and the campus climate, including the influence of the peer group, the living setting, and involvement in student activities. Successful orientation programs and activities must be based on a thorough knowledge and understanding of entering students' personal and academic development (Upcraft, 1984).

Upcraft, Finney and Garland (1984) have identified six

major developmental issues that students must deal with during the college years: (1) developing intellectual and academic competence, (2) establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, (3) developing a sex-role identity and sexuality, (4) deciding on a career and life-style, (5) formulating an integrated philosophy of life, and (6) maintaining personal health and wellness.

An effective orientation program should address each of these issues. The program must help students adjust to the academic demands of the classroom and provide techniques which will aid them in achieving academic success. "Academic skills are often discussed in orientation publications including becoming efficient and effective at reading college-level texts, taking exams, preparing research papers, managing time, and making important decisions" (Upcraft, 1984 p. 33)

An orientation program should help students establish and develop interpersonal relationships. The students should be aided in how to deal with faculty, administrative staff, professional services, and fellow students.

The orientation program should provide resources to the student on dealing with sexual relationships, the consequences of sexual activity, and the development of an appropriate sex-role identity.

New students will often have some instability in their career choices. The orientation program should make them aware of services and programs that are available on campus which will assist them in selecting and developing a career choice.

The orientation program should also help the students understand the importance of maintaining their personal health

and wellness, not only during their college career, but throughout their life. The impact of additional stress factors resulting from new surroundings, and academic demands should be addressed and ways of dealing with these stresses should be provided.

Orientation programs should be: (a) a continued and co-ordinated effort, (b) have the support and involvement of the entire campus, and (c) should be appropriately timed and co-ordinated through one central office.

Student attrition in the first year of enrollment is a major concern for colleges and universities. The high attrition rate underscores the need for an orientation program which addresses this concern. Orientation programs can accomplish many objectives including improving student retention. However, the primary goal for the program should be the students' effective use of their educational opportunity.

The orientation program can be beneficial in addressing retention in two ways: (1) The students are educated in some of the problems they may encounter in the first year of college and can then take the necessary steps to alleviate their concerns, and (2) It can identify some problems for both the school and the student that may be encountered, allowing for a preventative action plans to be implemented. (Zarvell, 1984)

According to National Orientation Directors Association (Zarvell, 1984), orientation planning calls for a thorough diagnosis of the environment, planning relative to the institution's mission, goals, objectives, strategies, recommended program changes and tactics, and effective resource allocation and implementation.

In order for the extended orientation program to be successful, it is essential for evaluation measures to be implemented. The following items are recommended by the National Orientation Directors Association:

- 1) Consumer satisfaction - are the activities enjoyable and worthwhile.
- 2) Expected outcomes - do the sessions accomplish what they were designed to produce in behavioral terms?
- 3) Staff performance - where are the weaknesses or loss of productivity?
- 4) Relevance to the institution - is the orientation program reflective of the institution?
- 5) Administrative factors - is the fee too high/low; is the program well organized?
- 6) Student needs - will this new student class encounter problems of which we should be aware? (Zarvell, 1984, p.36)

There are others items which the institution must consider that are not mentioned above. In 1978, Cohen and Jody identified the need to determine how the program would be presented, e.g., as a series of small-group meetings, workshops, or as a class awarding academic credit, of grading, or course requirement. The sequence of information presented should also be considered. Students to some extent face similar problems at given times during the semester. How ready they are to engage in particular topics depends on the applicability of the topic.

Grand Valley State University serves a different student population and its goals and missions differ from other institutions. This information serves as the basis for the University to develop a unique extended orientation program to address the concerns of its student population.

Finally, it is recommended that further research be done

to determine the specific needs of the student population and the causes of student attrition prior to continuing the development of the Freshmen Seminar program at Grand Valley State University.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the field experience provided the opportunity to expand this student's knowledge and experience in the higher education community. This experience has been beneficial in developing personal goals and administrative style, which will be beneficial in future positions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Freshman Seminar Evaluation (Student)

Name: _____ (optional)

Circle the day of the week your group met: Mon Tues Wed
Thur Fri

What time of the day did you meet? _____

Check your instructor(s) name(s)

____ Dennis Devlin, Kathy Sullivan _____ Jon Jellema
____ Ros Mayberry _____ John Miko, Connie Jones
____ Diana Pace, Walt Koch _____ Mary Seeger

How many sessions did you attend? _____

Would you have attended more sessions if you would have received academic credit for the seminar ? _____ Yes _____ No

Rank the following:

	<u>V.Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>NA</u>
Meeting location	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Book: <u>College is Only</u> <u>the Beginning?</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Meeting Time	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

YES OR NO

Y N

Would you recommend the seminar to other students ? _____

Did you learn things that helped you? _____

Were the session times convenient?
If no, what would have been better ? _____

Did you enjoy the sessions? _____

Would you feel free to go to your instructor of the Freshman Seminar for advise outside of your regular meeting time? _____

Would you have preferred a different format for the meetings? _____

If yes, indicate a possible preference:

_____ two full days just prior to the beginning of
the fall semester.

_____ twice per week for 4 - 6 weeks.

_____ once per day for two weeks.

What topic or activity was the most helpful for you?

What topic or activity was the least helpful?

Suggestions for additional topics or activities that were not included:

Comments:

Freshman Seminar Evaluation (Presenters)

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Are there topics that were not covered that you feel should have been included?

Comments and Reactions:

APPENDIX C

The information obtained from the evaluation tool is somewhat beneficial in providing guidelines for development but should not be considered a reflection of all of the freshman students at the university.

The following information is a breakdown of the responses received from the evaluation tool. (The percentages provided have been rounded off to the next percentage point.)

II. SURVEY

Presenter evaluation:

Number of evaluations sent:	9
Number of evaluations returned:	6
% of response	67%

Responses:

Meeting location:	0	= v.good	0%
	1	= good	16%
	4	= fair	66%
	1	= poor	16%
	0	= n/a	0%

Book:	5	= v.good	83%
	0	= good	0%
	1	= fair	16%
	0	= poor	0%
	0	= n/a	0%

Meeting time:	0	= v.good	0%
	0	= good	0%
	2	= fair	32%
	3	= poor	50%
	0	= n/a	0%

Yes or No Questions:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>%</u>
Would you recommend the seminar to students?	6	100%	0	0%

Were the sessions convenient?	2	32%	3	50%
Did you enjoy the sessions?	6	100%	0	0%
Was the program designed appropriately?	4	66%	1	16%
Were the materials applicable to the sessions?	5	83%	0	0%
Were the students interested in the material?	6	100%	0	0%
Did the students participate?	6	100%	0	0%
Would attendance have been better if the course received credit?	5	83%	0	0%
Would you be willing to participate again?	6	100%	0	0%

Quick Responses:

1. What topic or activity do you feel was the most beneficial for the students?

- Advising, study habits, the book
- If we would have been able to cover it:
Advising/Registration Evaluation of mid-semester grades
- They enjoyed the trip to Career Planning and Placement
- Study skills (Chapter 5)
- I think they all were beneficial, we pretty much let our groups decide on the topics to be covered.

2. What topic or activity do you feel was the least helpful?

- None
- All topics covered were well reviewed.
- I am not sure; I think the students could better answer this question.

3. Are there topics that were not covered that you feel should have been included?

- Perhaps the library tour and I think it would have been beneficial for someone from each of the support units to have spoken even for a few minutes.
- Book was used as reference only-students did not have copies
- Refer to "The Master Student"
- If time permitted: Ch 17, On Becoming a Leader, Ch 14, Developing a Healthier Lifestyle, Ch 15, Alcohol and Drugs

4. Comments and Reactions

- I feel positive about what happened in our sessions except for the attendance. Without credit I'm not sure there was much that could be done to get the students to attend.
- Of the seven students who volunteered only four showed up. One dropped because of time conflict, one never showed up again. The two students who remained were faithful.
- Must be for credit (should it count toward graduation?) Schedule in a classroom -might make it "feel " more official. Consider using the text "Becoming a Master Student" Many colleges/universities are using it throughout the country. Required for all FTIAC's and transfers with less than 13 credits, if possible.

Student evaluation:

Number of actual participants: 36

Number of evaluations returned: 21

Percentage of responses: 58% *

* The percentage of responses is based on the actual participants in the program. The percentage of responses if all evaluations are considered is 27%.

Responses:

Meeting location:	5	=	v.good	24%
	8	=	good	38%
	5	=	fair	24%
	1	=	poor	4%
	1	=	n/a	4%
	1	=	no response	4%

Book:

7	= v.good	33%
10	= good	48%
1	= fair	4%
0	= poor	0%
2	= n/a	10%
1	= no response	4%

Meeting time:

2	= v.good	10%
9	= good	42%
5	= fair	24%
3	= poor	14%
1	= n/a	4%
1	= no response	4%

Yes or No Questions: (NR identifies no response)	<u>Yes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>NR*</u>	<u>% *</u>
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Would you recommend the seminar to students?	18	86%	1	4%	1	4%
--	----	-----	---	----	---	----

Did you learn things that helped you?	16	76%	2	10%	3	14%
---------------------------------------	----	-----	---	-----	---	-----

Were the meeting times convenient?	14	67%	4	19%	3	14%
------------------------------------	----	-----	---	-----	---	-----

Did you enjoy the sessions?	14	67%	3	14%	4	19%
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Would you feel free to go to your instructor for advise outside regular meeting times ?	17	81%	1	4%	3	14%
---	----	-----	---	----	---	-----

Would you have preferred a different format?	7	33%	16	76%	5	24%
--	---	-----	----	-----	---	-----

Meeting preference:

Two full days prior to classes	1	4%
Twice per week for 4-6 weeks	5	24%
Once per day for two weeks	0	0%

Quick Responses:

1. What topic was the most helpful information to you?

- Interest inventory
- library use
- time management and helpful study hints for difficult classes
- discussing majors
- I couldn't really say; we were only able to just touch on different subjects, but probably the session we talked about profs or time management.
- I felt that all topics covered were very informative, especially the academic (last) session.
- 1) Library tour and 2) Discussion on planning schedules for future semesters (credit/no credit classes, audit, etc.)
- When we talked about campus activities and how to get involved.
- Study skills/ how to use time wisely
- Scheduling info.
- Library, scheduling information, stress and time management
- The library tour
- Scheduling information and discussion
- An undecided major
- How to study
- Letting them know how to do things
- All were helpful

2. What was the least helpful topic or activity discussed in your group?

- Assertiveness
- None
- personality characteristics
- Don't know

- I don't remember
- I didn't feel as though the minority session was appropriate for this seminar.
- "How minority students fit in"
- I felt all topics were helpful in one way or the other
- X's & O's - Minorities
- X's & O's - Minority
- "Being in the minority"
- X's & O's
- I think they all were helpful to at least one person

3. Suggestions for additional topics that were not included:

- Can't think of anything
- Additional study helps
- None
- Greater discussion on future plans
- Do more on test taking, how to take notes and that kind of thing
- Whatever the individuals in the group need
- Getting along with others. How to get help other than from parents.

4. Comments

- Gave me well needed insight to be successful in college. Suggest that the seminar not be conducted in the dorms-too much distraction.
- I liked the comfort of a casual setting and structure. There was no pressure. The instructors did a really nice job.
- It was helpful and I was glad to be a part of it.
- Since I am only taking an Art course and it is not working for a degree, I didn't go to any counseling. The same will be for my winter course.
- I liked the test, it may help.
- This will be really good in the future when/if the program continues and it can be more in depth.

- The instructors were very pleasant and made this seminar enjoyable. The variation of topics made this much more interesting.
- I enjoyed this seminar and would recommend it to upcoming freshman.
- I enjoyed our group and feel that it should be offered to all freshman so that people will not drop out.
- I feel the sessions were unprofessional, that's why a few of the questions above are unanswered. The students seemed bored. It needs to be much more interesting!
- I enjoyed the seminar and it helped me to adjust to the "new" college life.
- I really enjoyed the sessions ! I was interested in about everything we covered. I wish we could have covered stress and time management more.
- This class was the most enjoyable of all my classes. They were small enough to become familiar with everyone. I think no grades should be given for it. Credit/No Credit.
- I would have liked to attend the sessions but I couldn't make the first one because I couldn't attend the first session my R.A. took my name down and told me I would still get info on it if I was interested, but I didn't get any.
- Should be required for all incoming freshman.

III. IMPLICATIONS

The following section combines the responses and provides a summary of the information in a narrative form. This will be used and referred to in the recommendation section of evaluation.

Meeting location: The presenters did not respond favorably to the location. The students, however, who responded did not find the location to be as inappropriate as the presenters.

Book: There was an overwhelming positive response to the book from both the students and the presenters.

Meeting time: The meeting time was split. There was no

definite direction provided by the responses. Presenters did not find the time to be convenient, students were not as uncomfortable with the arrangement. In the yes and no section of the questionnaire, students responded positively to the convenience of the sessions.

Both students and presenters would recommend the seminar to other students and enjoyed the sessions. The information provided was identified as being helpful to the students by both the presenters and the students.

Specific items appeared to be more interesting and helpful to the students. They are as follows: Study skills, library tour, time management, and scheduling information (advising).

APPENDIX D

COMPARATIVE DATA INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS AND THE COUNSELING CENTER

Institutional Data

Fall 1984 to Winter 1985

Retention by Admissions Status (FTIAC = First time in any college)

	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>% Returned W85</u>	<u>% Not Returned W85</u>
FTIAC	1,134	88.9%	11.1%

Cumulative Grade Point Averages After Fall 1984

Returned W85	2.53
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Counseling Center

Retention by Admissions Status (FTIAC = First time in any college)

	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>% Returned W85</u>	<u>% Not Returned W85</u>
FTIAC	73	95%	5%

Cumulative Grade Point Averages After Fall 1984

Returned W85	2.42
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Grade Point Average Median = 2.44

Institutional Data

Fall 1984 to Fall 1985

Retention by Admissions Status (FTIAC = First time in any college)

	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>% Returned F85</u>	<u>% Not Returned F85</u>
FTIAC	1,137	65.0%	35.0%

Cumulative Grade Point Averages After Summer 1985

Returned F85	2.64
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Counseling Center**Retention by Admissions Status**
(FTIAC = First time in any college)

	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>% Returned W85</u>	<u>% Not Returned W85</u>
FTIAC	73	63%	37%

Cumulative Grade Point Averages After Fall 1984

Returned W85 2.79

Grade Point Average Median = 2.66

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