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# Advisors' Perceptions of Barriers to a Smooth Transition from a Community College to a Four-year University

Edith M. Geleski

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ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS  
TO A SMOOTH TRANSITION FROM A COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
TO A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Edith M. Geleskie

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2008

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## ABSTRACT

Title: Advisors' Perceptions of Barriers to a Smooth Transition from a Community College to a Four-year University

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This descriptive study examines advisors' perceptions of barriers that impede or inhibit the smooth transition of students transferring from a community college to a four-year university. Administering poor, inaccurate or improper advice to potential transfer students can pose serious problems to both community colleges and four-year colleges and universities whose student population is comprised of a growing number of transfer students. Without effective transfer advising programs, transfer students often suffer from a loss of transfer credit. Many current transfer practices impair community college students' efforts toward completing a baccalaureate degree because students often have to repeat one or more courses at senior institutions. This practice is costly to both students and taxpayers. To better serve students wishing to transfer and apply a large number of transfer credits towards an undergraduate degree, students and advisors would benefit from a more strategic and effective advising process supported by the institution.

The study used a quantitative survey and a series of short open-ended questions designed to assess advisor perceptions of their role of advising students transferring from a community college to a four-year university. The study built upon previous research on academic advising with updated survey items added to reflect current transfer advising

practices. The survey focused on advisors' perceptions of the importance and practice of the role of an advisor, advising tasks and skills, and perceived barriers to effective advising.

The study concluded that the perception of the advisors at both the community college and the four-year university agree on the existence of barriers to effective advising and that their perceptions of the importance and practice of the role of an advisor contributes to these barriers. The other barriers identified in the study include 1) level of interest, 2) training, 3) access to accurate information, 4) motivation or rewards, and 5) time limitations. The advisors agree that many of these barriers can be minimized with the support, cooperation and commitment of the administration together with the advisors in developing an advising process that utilizes a more holistic rather than prescriptive approach.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In an era of growing accountability and limited resources in education, it can be argued that many aspects of current programs offered in higher education need to be reassessed in light of present day student needs. One area of higher education structure, college transfer programs, has not kept pace with the changes in higher education. As the number of transfer students continues to move to new levels, institutions of higher education must also take on new and improved methods of dealing with the transfer students. Without a transfer function as a rudimentary part of the community college mission, access to a baccalaureate degree may be limited for many students.

One way to incorporate a smooth transfer function is through effective advising. Advising is a significant issue in higher education and particularly to students transferring from community colleges into four-year colleges and universities. Although the concept of transfer is not new to higher education, there are multiple factors that create barriers for students wanting to transfer from a community college to an accredited four-year post secondary institution. By definition, a transfer student is a student who seeks to move from one institution to another, expecting credit recognition for coursework successfully completed and expecting to be treated equally with all other students (Bender, 1990).

What seems to the average person like a relatively simple process—that of transferring credits from one institution to another—in many cases turns into an exasperating, lengthy and often disappointing ordeal. The reasons given according to existing literature include poor or incorrect advising, lack of articulation agreements, perceived level and quality of coursework completed at a community college,

uncertainty, and non-application or loss of transfer credit towards chosen baccalaureate degree requirements (Bender, 1990; Prager, 1993).

Academic advising is one critical component of the transfer function that if administered appropriately and effectively, can create a seamless transfer process, or at least can contribute to a more consistent and coherent transition from one institution of learning to another. Poor, incorrect or marginal advice can lead prospective transfer students down a path of uncertainty and potential ineligibility.

Transfer students are essential to the overall upper division student population. Transfer students fill the gaps left by attrition. Students who transfer to four-year colleges and universities help fulfill the mission of the community college. It is therefore imperative that the transfer process be seamless. Effective advising and communication between community colleges and four-year institutions of higher education are a vital part of this transfer process.

#### *Evolution of the Community College and its Mission in Higher Education*

The comprehensive community college's mission is to prepare all citizens of its community for a better life. The community college has a special obligation to fully meet its constituency's needs. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC,) community colleges, which represent a vital segment of American higher education, play a major role in the American system of public education (Doucette and Roueche, 1991). Approximately 1200 community colleges serve over 6 million credit students. These students represent roughly 45 percent of all students in higher education, and essentially 50 percent of all first-time freshmen each fall term (Doucette and Roueche, 1991; Parnell, 1985). While the mission of the community college continues to

reshape, the direction of the change is not crystal clear; a consensus on the future mission has not yet emerged (Clowes & Levin, 1989).

Until the 1950s, community college transfer programs accounted for 60 – 70 percent of total enrollment, and student transfer rates served as an important measure of institutional success (Eells, 1931; Medsker, 1960; Lombardi, 1979). High school enrollments in transfer programs continued to dominate community colleges in both numbers and importance until the early 1970s. Liberal arts and general education enrollments shifted downward through the 1980s from 57 percent in 1970 – 1971 to 28 percent in 1984 – 1985 (Barry and Barry, 1992). Expansion of the two-year college curriculum during the 1960s and the 1970s into non-collegiate areas took a toll on transfer curricula and on the image of community colleges as collegiate institutions (Palmer, 1986). The number of transfer students declined as did the number of course offerings at community colleges. The emphasis on liberal arts gave way to career, compensatory, and community education, thus leading many to question the viability of the transfer function (Baron, 1982; Cohen and Brauer, 1982; Knoell, 1932; and Lombardi, 1979; Wechsler, 1989).

The transfer function has been considered fundamental to the comprehensive community college mission. Knoell and Medsker's 1965 landmark study indicated that 62 percent of the 7000 community college students in the study received bachelor degrees within 3 years of transfer, with the prediction that at least 75 percent would ultimately receive a baccalaureate degree (Knoell and Medsker, 1965; Wechsler, 1989). Knoell and Medsker concluded from their extensive national landmark study conducted between 1960 and 1964, that although community colleges have made a fine record in

preparing students to transfer to a very diverse group of four-year colleges and universities, improvement in the record is still possible (Berstein, 1986, p. 31).

Today, approximately 22 percent of community college students transfer to four-year institutions, with less than 25 percent of these transfer students completing a baccalaureate degree (ACE, 1993; Policies, 1996). Community colleges are criticized for not sending more students forward toward the baccalaureate degree as well as not preparing them for a rigorous academic environment at four-year colleges and universities. Negative perceptions with which community colleges must invariably contend are admissions of failure of the transfer mission (Doucette and Roueche, 1991).

The practice of open-access, admitting large numbers of students regardless of academic preparation and background, has brought forth criticisms of the community college. Critics have questioned the academic reputation of the community college because of its open-access policy, the predominance of vocational and occupational programs, the extent of remedial education programs, and the decline of academic standards. “The most pervasive and long-lived issue in community colleges is the extent to which their courses are accepted by the universities” (Cohen & Brawer, 1988, p. 285). This study, through the process of analyzing the perceptions of advisors who work directly with transfer students at both a community college and a four-year university, will identify a list of recommendations that will benefit all constituents involved in the transfer function.

Because community college students must transfer to other institutions in order to earn the bachelor’s degree, community college leaders should strive to make the transition from community college to four-year institutions a more efficient process so

students do not lose college credits during the transfer. Community colleges will undoubtedly benefit from the identification of advising factors that create barriers to a smooth transition between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities.

Academic advisors and particularly transfer advisors will benefit from a clear understanding of what students are able to transfer to senior institutions without losing college credits. Courses taught in transfer degree programs are designed to prepare individuals for transfer, as upper-division students, to baccalaureate degree programs in four-year colleges. Some four-year colleges and universities, however, will not accept some transfer credits. One reason is the lack of confidence on the part of the four-year college that courses taught at the community college represent truly college-level work. On the other hand, community college students take courses under the assumption that courses in the transfer curriculum will be accepted at four-year colleges for credit toward the baccalaureate degree.

### *The Problem*

There is an abundance of literature on students attending community colleges and the process of transferring from a community college into a traditional college or university; however, there has been little research to examine advisors' perceptions of the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer between the two institutions. Many state colleges and universities have state mandated guidelines to help determine advanced standing credit, however, independent and private institutions are not required to follow these guidelines (Bender, 1990; Knoell & Medsker, 1990). These institutions of higher education are at liberty to establish their own policies and procedures for determining advanced standing or transfer credit and whether or not this credit is equivalent to actual

courses or merely “elective” credit that does not necessarily apply toward degree requirements.

The lack of administering proper and accurate advice to potential transfer students can pose serious problems to both community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Without effective transfer advising programs, transfer students often suffer from a loss of transfer credit. Eaton (1994) states that current transfer practices impede community college students’ efforts toward earning a baccalaureate degree because students may have to repeat one or more courses at senior institutions. This practice, she suggests, is costly to both students and to taxpayers. Because there is an increasing need to provide an effective transfer program, community college administrators, faculty, and academic advisers need to increase their knowledge of advising strategies in order to effectively address the existing barriers of transfer students as perceived by advisers and counselors at both community colleges and four-year universities.

#### *Statement of Purpose*

This study focuses on the perceptions of advisers and counselors who work directly with transfer students, specifically students attending a community college and electing to transfer to a four-year college with the academic goal of completing a baccalaureate degree. The goal for two- and four-year colleges is to make the students’ journey to completion of a baccalaureate degree as efficient, smooth, educationally rewarding, and challenging as possible (Bernstein, 1986). Identifying perceived barriers to effective transfer advising which will facilitate a smooth transition to a senior institution will be valuable for two major reasons. First, the assumption or expectation that all credits will automatically be accepted by the chosen four-year institution

significantly affects the transfer from community colleges to senior institutions. Thus, community college transfer students may have to repeat one or more courses at senior institutions, delaying degree completion. If transfer of college credit were automatic and not on a course-by-course, school-by-school basis, students would better understand their transfer status. Delay in completing a baccalaureate degree economically impacts the student in terms of additional tuition and delayed entry into the job market, as well as major implication for federal financial aid recipients and cost to taxpayers (Bender, 1990).

Second, admission policies and practices play a vital role in the transition of students from community colleges into four-year colleges and universities. With regard to community college students, admission policies and practices of four-year institutions can be broken down into four general areas: requirements, access, exceptions to requirements and the role of the associate degree.

Generally speaking, the amount of attention that states and institutions devote to the admission of freshman far surpasses that given to admission of students with advanced standing (Knoell, 1990). As standards and requirements for freshman admission have increased, questions about the need for changes in requirements for transfer applicants demand attention. A distinction between admission “requirements” and “standards” may give some additional clarity. For purposes of this study, the term *requirements* refers to the type of criteria used to admit applicants such as high school grade point average, class rank, course completion, or admission test scores. The term *standards* refers to the specific minimum achievement of these requirements such as a gpa of 3.0 on a 4.0 grading scale or rank in the upper 20 percent of a class. Some schools

maintain general requirements for admission policies but allow specific standards to vary across colleges, departments and programs from year to year in response to demand and other factors. Others specify both requirements and standards in their admission policies but view them as minimal to establish eligibility pools from which internal divisions then select the best qualified applicants. Still other schools guarantee admission to all applicants who meet the minimum standards.

A major issue that continues to exist for transfer students is the lack of clarity about the requirements and standards that transfer students must meet in order to be approved for admission with advanced standing credit. Increased requirements and standards for freshman admission tend to increase transfer applicants' uncertainty about their eligibility for acceptance to particular institutions and programs with which they have attempted to articulate their lower-division courses of study. This growing uncertainty is not diminished by the universities whose transfer guides with local community colleges and other post-secondary institutions identifies in detail the sequences of courses to be completed by students pursuing certain baccalaureate degree programs, but at the same time caution students that satisfactory completion of such courses does not insure admission with advanced standing to these programs.

The attitude or perception of faculty and non-faculty advisers as it relates to advising transfer students is an important key to identifying the characteristics of a smooth transition between a community college and a four-year university. To gain such an understanding calls for research that can specifically address this problem. If faculty, administrators, and advisers can develop advising programs that provide effective vehicles of credit transfer, it may be possible to increase the enrollment in transfer

programs and thereby increase transfer rates to senior institutions. This, in turn, could increase the number of students completing the baccalaureate degree and bring that portion of the community college mission, transfer, to the forefront once again.

### *Method of Study*

The method of research will be a descriptive analysis of the current advising practices used by a community college and a private four-year university that awards advanced standing credit to students who have successfully completed prescribed course work at a community college. The study will be conducted in two phases. First a survey using a Likert scale will be administered. A questionnaire consisting of 42 questions pertaining to advising transfer students was developed followed by a series of short open-ended questions. This survey was administered to key people at a community college (Steel City Community College) and four-year institution (Three Rivers University). The names of these two institutions have been replaced with pseudonyms for anonymity. One group will consist of faculty and non-faculty advisors who work closely with transfer students at the Community College. The second group will consist of faculty and non-faculty advisors at the four-year university.

The second phase of the study will take the responses from the survey and open-ended questions of the SCCC group and contrast them to the responses of the Three Rivers group. The results will be representative of the overall expectations, perceptions and realities of the advising component of the transfer process identifying critical factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university.

Identifying advising factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer will generate a list of recommendations that will enhance the recruitment and retention of the growing number of transfer students striving to complete a baccalaureate degree by starting at a community college.

### *Research Questions*

The study is designed to address the following broad research questions that are appropriate to descriptive research:

1. What is the relationship between advisors' perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of academic advising?
2. What are the perceived administrative barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university?
3. What are the perceived similarities and differences among the two-year advisers in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?
4. What are the perceived similarities and differences among the four-year advisers in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?
5. Is there a difference between what community college and four-year university advisers perceive as the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?

### *Definition of Terms*

The following section defines a number of terms used throughout this research paper. Knowledge of these terms is prerequisite to understanding advising and transfer

policies and procedures. To clarify further and to help the reader gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of these concepts, some terms necessitate more elaborate explanations than others.

*Advising*: is the act of informing someone of something; making a proposal, declaring a plan for something. In terms of higher education, advising pertains to developing academic plans and the steps necessary to achieve those plans.

*Articulation Agreement*: refers to systematic efforts, processes or services intended to ensure educational continuity and to facilitate orderly, unobstructed progress between levels or segments of institutions on a statewide, regional, or institution-to-institution basis (Bender, 1990).

*Community College*: is a distinct educational institution, loosely linked to other community colleges by the shared goals of access and service according to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2002). Open admission and the tradition of charging low tuition are among the practices they have in common. Each community, however, has its own mission—the fountain from which all of its activities flow. In simplest terms, the mission of the community college is to provide education for individuals, many of whom are adults, in its service region.

*Transfer program*: a program of instruction, at the post secondary instructional level, yielding credits, which are normally acceptable by four-year colleges and universities for full (or virtually full) value toward a baccalaureate degree (Samani, 1997 p.16 ).

*Transfer student*: a student who seeks to move from one institution to another institution expecting credit recognition for coursework successfully completed and expecting to be treated equally with all other students (Bender, 1990).

*Open-access policy:* a policy of some colleges and universities of accepting any candidate who presents a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate; nonselective admission, instituted in some cases to make higher education more accessible to minority group students; occasionally referred to as open-door admission (Samani, 1997 p. 16).

*Traditional college or university:* an academic institution of higher learning; accredited by regional agencies that authorizes the granting of specific degrees in disciplines that comply with strict curricular criteria. The curriculum encompasses a dynamic and liberal selection of fundamental courses in the humanities, social and natural sciences (Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990). Liberal arts colleges offer a number of programs, whose curricula lead to certificates, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctoral degrees—the highest degree of distinction in academia. The common mission is to provide individuals with lifelong learning skills and to be productive, responsible citizens capable of achieving successful careers in their chosen professions (Kennedy, 1997).

*Native student:* a student who begins his or her higher educational studies at a four-year institution and does not transfer to another institution of higher education (Carlan & Byxbe, 2000).

*Non-traditional student:* a student who is older than 24 years of age, does not live in a campus residence (e.g. is a commuter), or is a part-time student, or some combination of these three factors; is not greatly influenced by social environment of the institution; and is chiefly concerned with the institution's academic offerings such as courses, certifications and degrees (Bean & Metzner, 1987).

### *Significance of the Study*

Advising is a dyadic relationship between students whose attitudes and perceptions have been ascertained by many studies, and the adviser (both faculty and non-faculty) whose perceptions have been largely ignored. Since faculty are actively engaged in the advising process and since faculty in many respects control both the relationship and the process, it is important to understand their perceptions and attitudes towards advising and their role in advising. Likewise, it is important to understand the perceptions and attitudes of the non-faculty advisers since they too are actively engaged in the advising process, particularly counselors housed under the enrollment department who deal directly with all students applying for college. That includes enrollment counselors in both community colleges and four-year colleges and universities.

### *Limitations of the Study*

This study is limited to two common types of institutions of higher education in a specific geographic location—a community college and a private four-year university whose enrollment consists of nearly half of transfer students. The study is further limited to individuals who work directly with transfer students such as faculty and non-faculty advisors, enrollment counselors/recruiters, and chief academic officers of the two institutions. A possible yet important limitation may be the small number of survey respondents, yielding a rather small amount of data for analysis. The researcher believes the data received is representative of the advisors' perceptions from both institutions of higher education. There is a possibility the study may have different results with greater participation; however, all eligible advisors, counselors and administrators were invited to participate in the study. The research takes into account the possibility that those who

chose to participate may have a stronger interest in advising than those who chose not to participate. Nonetheless, the return rate more than meets the minimum to qualify as a significant study.

Finally, the study may be limited by the diverse backgrounds, level of training and experience of the individuals working with transfer students. Nevertheless, the findings of this study may be generalized, with a degree of caution, to apply to other populations with similar characteristics.

### *Organization of the Study*

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of academic advising and outlines the purpose and research questions for this study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to the evolution of the community college, the history of academic advising, the advisor role, models and systems of advising, and the theoretical basis for the study. Chapter 3 describes the design of the study, selection of the sample and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. Chapter 4 discusses the findings and presents data analysis related to the research questions. Chapter 5 summarizes the study, draws conclusions from the data analysis and identifies a list of recommendations to help minimize marginal advice to improve the efficiency of the transfer function. Lastly the chapter presents suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to identify academic advisors' and counselors' perceptions of barriers preventing a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university. This chapter provides a conceptual foundation for questions addressed by the study as well as the theoretical basis for the research design as it relates to academic advising in higher education. The chapter begins with an historical perspective of the development of community colleges in the United States, which is followed by an overview of the history and importance of academic advising. Then, a description of the prevailing advising systems and common delivery methods present a fundamental understanding of academic advising in higher education. The chapter then takes an in-depth look at issues related to current advisor roles and practices as academic advisors. The final portion of this chapter presents the conceptual framework underlying the study.

#### *An Historical Overview of the Community College*

An historical view of the development of the community college is important to understanding the rise of the two-year college. Various social, economic, and political forces have contributed to the rapid growth and expansion of the comprehensive two-year community college (Samani, 1997, p.18). American society believed that opportunity for a college education should be available to a substantial number of students who had a desire to attend college, and who could profit from the experience because of the belief that higher education leads to upward mobility and a better way of life. A casual reading of history seems to justify that belief and to support reliance on education as the path to upward mobility and economic status in our society (Wilson, 1986).

In the early nineteenth century, very few people graduated from high school; even fewer people graduated from four-year colleges or universities. Higher education centered on wealthy men in America and was limited to the higher socio-economic classes (AACC, 2007).

In the early part of the twentieth century, changes occurred that enhanced the outlook for educational access for many men and women in America. Several educational leaders in the last half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, mainly influenced by the German university model, advocated removing the first two years of higher education from the university setting and placing them in separate institutions called junior colleges (Larimer, 1977). The early educational leaders planned to focus the universities on research and the discovery of new knowledge. Early leaders believed two-year colleges could then concentrate on the “less demanding”, basic first two-years of college, referring to the foundation of a liberal education (Larimer, 1977, p220).

Students who were under-prepared to compete at the university level or unable to gain admission to the university because they were not part of the very rich upper class now had an opportunity for at least two years of college. Separating the senior level from the junior level was primarily a means of diverting students away from the university, thus freeing universities of their obligation to provide the first two years of college and allowing them to pursue research and advanced professional training (Bring & Karabell, 1989). The two-year colleges offered a university-parallel or transfer program designed to prepare students to transfer to senior institutions.

Thomas Jefferson believed education should be practical as well as liberal and serve the individual as well as society (Jefferson, 1786). Modern community colleges echo Jefferson's philosophy. Egalitarianism is the hallmark of the community college mission. The influence of World War II and industry's demand for trained technicians have created a need for educated students. Such influences have also given local control to the educational system and provided relevant curricula, designed to meet the needs of both individual and the nation (AACC Historical Information).

### *The Morrill Act*

The historical evolution of the community college started with the Morrill Act of 1862, which was intended to establish colleges to train men and women in agricultural and mechanical arts (Monroe, 1972). Because it provided a low cost college education to the lower socio-economic classes, this act had a great impact on higher education in America. This was the first time federal money was allocated for vocational programs. It provided for the establishment of college programs that would emphasize practical vocations such as, engineering, and agriculture (Monroe, 1972). Although the Morrill Act did help to provide higher education to a larger number of young men, most of the students attending college were still from the higher income families. The lower socio-economic classes still had very limited access to higher education (AACC Research 2007).

In 1900, the principle of free, tax-supported high schools was accepted throughout the nation (Cremin, 1961). Since the community college was destined to grow out of the local high schools, the principle of tax-supported secondary education was a vital step in the development of local community colleges. The Morrill Act of 1862 and the "second

Morrill Act” of 1890 were the most important moves by the Federal Government into the field of higher education in the nineteenth century. These two acts provided the philosophical base on which later federal aid to higher education would rest; namely, that secondary and post-secondary education were essential and deserving of public financial support.

### *Development of Junior Colleges*

Community colleges were established in the early 1900s as junior colleges, and their main purpose was to relieve the four-year institutions from the task of orienting first and second year college students to higher education and to free the university to do research and teach advanced studies (Brint & Karabel, 1989). The early junior colleges were founded as relatively small institutions for traditional college-age students and provided the first two years of a liberal education (McGrath & Spear, 1991; Eaton, 1994; Rudolph, 1977; and Astin, 1993).

A number of educational leaders advocated removing the first two years of higher education from the university setting and placing them in separate institutions. Among these leaders were Henry P. Tappan, president of the University of Michigan; William Watts Falwell, President of University of Minnesota; David Starr Jordan, President of Stanford University; Alexis Lange, a Dean at the University of California at Berkeley; and finally, William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago (Samani, 2004).

Harper, known as the “father of the junior college in America,” saw a need to separate the first two years of college from the second two years. Harper wanted to provide some level of education to as many students as possible, but not through the

universities; they would educate those students who were capable of very high-level intellectual thought. Thus, the junior college grew out of this desire to provide more opportunity to the more capable students. Harper is credited with founding Joliet Junior College, one of the first American public junior colleges, established in 1901. The founding of Joliet was the beginning of the junior college movement. Harper's influence on the development of the public junior college in Joliet, Illinois, was one of his most significant contributions (Kostick, 2001).

The 1922 American Association of Junior Colleges' definition of the junior college was "an institution offering two years of instruction strictly collegiate grade where the courses must be identical in scope and thoroughness to their corresponding courses of the standard four-year college" (Bogue, 1950, cited by Cohen & Brawer, 1989, p.4).

Among the junior college presidents surveyed in 1917 and 1918, ninety percent said that the public demand for greater educational opportunity was an important reason for the founding of their colleges, and fifty percent said that is was the most important reason (McDowell, 1919). The early leaders of the junior college movement believed that general education courses should be a part of the occupational curriculum and that transfer curricula should be an option in all colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

In 1917, California passed a bill providing state and county support for junior college students comparable to that of high school students (California Community Colleges System, 2007). California continued its support through state funding in 1921 by passing legislation providing for the organization of the independent junior college district with its own boards, budgets, and operating procedures (California Master Plan

for Higher Education, 2007). The California legislation provided for local control, and most importantly equated the first two years of junior college work with the first two years of university work. Additionally, legislation extended public education to the thirteenth and fourteenth years and endorsed the concept of having public institutions of higher education available locally. These California laws were models for later legislation in other states. The state of California was a leading force in the junior college movement (Maclay, 2003).

#### *From Junior to Community College*

After 1920, the community college movement had begun to find a place in the American system of public education. The number of junior colleges rose from 403 in 1929 to 584 in 1945 (Monroe, 1972); the next big leap was after World War II, and particularly after 1960. This rapid growth can be attributed to several factors: high school graduates wanting a college education, the growing demand of business and industry for technically trained employees, the existence of local communities that had both sufficient taxable wealth and population willing to support a community college, and a body of citizens who aspired to have their children enjoy the fulfillment of a dream for a college education but were unable to afford the cost of attending a university.

During the early part of the twentieth century, the “university parallel” programs were exemplary, with career, technical, and remedial programs clearly distinguishable from the transfer program (McGrath & Spear, 1991). However, in 1932, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching issued a report strongly endorsing the idea that transfer preparation should no longer be the primary function of the junior college and that terminal or vocational education should be the focus (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

This report started a controversy over program emphasis, which remains unresolved. Until 1932, collegiate education had been the most important aspect of the two-year college mission.

Junior colleges changed dramatically over the next 50 years, serving a clientele uniquely different from the traditional college student in age, gender, and academic proficiency. Junior colleges began to serve a clientele that was part-time, female, and adult, interested primarily in vocational or terminal occupational studies (Astin, 1993). The once dominant transfer function became just one of several important functions and the liberal arts curriculum no longer occupied the central position it had previously (McGrath & Spear, 1991; and Knoell, 1991).

#### *Government Takes an Active Role in Higher Education*

The end of World War II not only increased enrollments in community colleges, but also brought about other significant changes in higher education (Lucas, 1994; Vaughan, 2006). It was during this time that the federal government decided to become more involved in higher education. Many men were returning home to the United States seeking jobs that they had held before the war. Women now occupied many of these positions. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the G.I. Bill, further affected the junior colleges (Lucas, 1994, p. 232; Vaughan, 2006).

The G.I. Bill provided a form of scholarship for veterans. The Bill provided for the first large-scale financial aid packages and as a result, college enrollment increased substantially. The G.I. Bill not only led to a more non-traditional student population, with the return of older servicemen, it also opened up the opportunity to attend college to those who might not have considered it an option. Veterans took advantage of this

opportunity and enrollments at the colleges and universities increased tremendously. This bill, along with other federal funding, provided money for career education that led to growth in vocational education programs in higher education (Lucas, 1994, p. 233; Vaughan, 2006).

Many of these veterans entered junior colleges. Programs of direct student aid had an enormous impact on community college enrollment, student body composition, programs, and its overall mission. By the end of World War II, the junior college had expanded its mission to serve veterans through open access (Lucas, 1994, p. 233; Vaughan, 2006).

The Junior college has been viewed as the leading edge of an open and egalitarian system of higher education (AACC, 2007). The four-year colleges and universities could not admit the large number of students who wanted to attend college. Furthermore, the colleges and universities were very selective in admissions. From the perspective of equal opportunity, there was a need for the services of the junior colleges.

While junior colleges continued to offer college transfer courses, the shift in emphasis to vocational or terminal occupational studies meant that junior colleges offered fewer liberal arts and transfer programs, causing the traditional collegiate function to become less important (Eaton, 1994).

In 1947, the President's Commission of Higher Education, known as the Truman Commission, articulated the value derived from students having access to two years of study beyond the secondary level (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). The commission expressed its belief that America should break down its barriers to educational opportunity at the post-secondary level. Because of its decidedly egalitarian focus, the commission

suggested that community colleges promote an open-access policy and provide accommodations to serve the under-prepared student now being admitted. Because community colleges are the first step for many students entering higher education, their effectiveness is crucial (Smart & Hamm, 1993).

Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., former president of Graceland College in Iowa and former Executive Director for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2007), as the national spokesperson for community colleges, did more than any other individual to shape the mission of the community colleges (Gleazer, et al, 2001). In 1972, on the fiftieth anniversary of the American Association of Junior Colleges, the Association expressed broad aims for the community college. Among them, it was stated that “the community college must become available to everyone in its community” (Palinchak, 1973, p. 126).

Because of the American society’s growing demand for education for greater numbers of students, statewide systems of community colleges have evolved. With the development of statewide systems, some areas are now able to have a community college within commuting distance of most students’ homes. However, statewide systems have been achieved only with the help of state funding. This has eroded some local control, but it has also created a partnership between state and locality that resulted in rapid growth of community colleges.

The Truman Commission, G.I. Bill, Civil Rights Act, and other political developments spearheaded the belief that all Americans should have access to education, which is an important concept in the community college mission. The Federal government committed itself to higher education by establishing in 1972 the Basic

Educational Opportunity Grants (Pell Grants) and other types of financial aid putting education within reach of the lower socio-economic groups. These and other factors have contributed to the development of the comprehensive community college as we know it today (Samani, 1997).

### *The Comprehensive Community College*

The comprehensive community college is unique, significant, dynamic, and a challenging component of higher education. It is a blend, borrowing heavily from the public high school, the private junior colleges, and the four-year colleges and universities, but still maintains an identity of its own. Since the community college is comprehensive, it must provide transfer programs as well as a variety of vocational/technical programs to meet the needs of a diverse group of students.

The 1960s were a time of dramatic change for the community colleges with its roots in the past and a rapidly growing future. The major college functions were general education, transfer, and preparation for entry-level employment, with remedial courses offered for those not prepared for college-level work. The student population consisted of recent high school graduates from families whose economic status was generally above the poverty level (AACC, 2007, STATS Home).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the community college population changed significantly from predominately full-time students to one consisting of many part-time, adult students, who worked full-time (AACC, 2007, STATS Home). It is well known that many students at community colleges are under-prepared for the academic rigor of college-level work (Bernstein, 1986; Clowes and Levin, 1989; Eaton, 1996). Eaton (1996) argued that a combination of lower skilled community college students and their

socio-economic background has resulted in a less rigorous academic climate than may be found in four-year colleges, producing a detrimental effect on the community college transfer programs. Other critics have also noted a perceived decline in the quality of baccalaureate preparation on the part of community college students (Richardson, et al, 1983; Clowes & Levin, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Bernstein, 1986).

### *Changing Demographics*

By 1970, the student population at the community college had changed as a result of students being oriented towards careers and being ill-prepared to meet the challenging academic environment (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). The term non-traditional characterized the community college students. They were part-time, older, working full-time, and included many more female students. In order to meet the needs of this group, community colleges began to develop evening programs and provide classes at off-campus sites. The changing student population included a change in social class, which supplied a majority of the community college students. A larger proportion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds began to enroll. Differences in social class generally imply less interest in general educational goals (Deegan & Tillary, 1985). The lower ability of the community college student and their socio-economic background resulted in a less rigorous academic climate than is found in some four-year colleges and universities (Deegan & Tillary, 1985). Open-access had begun to have a significant adverse effect on community college transfer programs intended to lead students to the baccalaureate degree. The decline of high school student abilities in the 1970s caused academic expectations to decrease, which had a pronounced negative effect (Cohen & Brawer, 1987).

By 1980, ninety percent of the community college enrollment in liberal arts programs was in courses with no prerequisites. Cohen & Brawer (1987) noted the beginning of a strong emphasis on occupational courses. Open-access led to a wide range of educational and quasi-educational programs and services, many of which were not at the college-level and did not lead to a baccalaureate degree (Eaton, 1994). As the community colleges broadened the scope of their offerings, there was a transformation to more career education, adult-basic education, and compensatory programs (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). By the mid-1980s, the community colleges had become comprehensive in nature, with their programs and services offered to an increasingly diverse student body. Developmental programs continued to grow in order to meet the needs of the growing number of students with serious educational deficiencies (Knoell, 1991).

Community colleges were first established in the early 1900s as junior colleges. Their main purpose was to relieve four-year institutions from orienting first and second year students to the higher education environment and to free the university to conduct research in addition to teaching advanced studies (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Beginning junior colleges were founded as relatively small institutions for traditional college-age students. These two-year colleges provided the first two years of a liberal education (Astin, 1993; Eaton, 1994; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Rudolph, 1977). The major functions of the junior college included general education, transfer and preparation for entry-level employment, with remedial courses offered for those not prepared for college-level work. During the 1970s and 1980s the community college population changed significantly from predominantly full-time students to a population consisting of many part-time, transfer, and adult students who worked full-time (AACC, 2007, STATS

Home). Students seeking to transfer coursework from community colleges to four-year institutions faced a number of issues.

### *Transfer Issues*

One of the primary transfer issues dealt with the level of coursework completed at the community college. Other issues include the transferability of coursework completed and the elements of a successful transfer function. The widespread lack of clarity about the requirements and standards of college-level course work affects the transfer of college credit. Even within the same state system of higher education, courses that transfer to one institution may not be acceptable for transfer by another. Though there are viable reasons for lack of transferability, there are cases where the reasons are not obvious, and there is little recourse for the sending institution or the student. This situation exists even though the same accrediting body accredits both of the institutions involved.

### *Transferability of Coursework*

Noncompliance—the inability to conform due to a lack of congruence or equivalent standards—in transfer often occurs because four-year colleges believe community college course work is not college-level (Dougherty, 1991; Melander & Robertson, 1992; Richardson & Bender, 1986). In addition, four-year colleges are uncertain about what is required of those community college students who apply for advanced standing credit, especially those who did not meet the four-year requirements upon graduation from high school (ACE, 1993; Knoell, 1991).

Community colleges have been criticized for often making little effort to ensure that their transfer courses indeed parallel university courses in credit hours, rigor, course sequencing, and prerequisites. Community colleges use the phrases college parallel,

college transfer, and college equivalent interchangeably to describe academic programs equivalent to the first two years of a baccalaureate degree program. Regardless of the phrase used, many four-year colleges are reluctant to accept community college transfer, taking them only if they cannot fill their classes with freshman (Dougherty, 1992). When students do transfer, many students lose credit because four-year colleges demand course equality rather than course comparability based on learning outcomes (Prager, 1993). Here course equality refers to the actual content of a course as opposed to a peripheral comparison of course title, course level and/or prerequisites. Four-year colleges routinely refuse credit for community college courses that have no counterpart in their curriculum, such as many vocational/technical educational courses. Four-year colleges in most cases award no credit, or only partial credit, for community college courses for which a student has received a grade of “D”, although four-year native students (students who complete all degree requirements at the same institution, i.e., freshmen through senior year) are not so penalized (Dougherty, 1992). If students have to earn the same credits twice, the public and the students pay for those courses twice.

### *Successful Transfer Function*

A successful transfer function depends less on what specific courses students take than on the strength of the classroom and the closeness of the fit between the academic cultures of the community college and that of the university (McGrath & Spear, 1991). The renewed emphasis on transfer challenges institutional assumptions and values (American Council on Education, 1993). According to the American Council on Education (1993), transfer is a function of teaching and learning and not simply a procedural matter dealing with program articulation and credit transfer. Two- and four-

year colleges need to look at ways curricula, pedagogy, and academic standards shape transfer opportunities for community college students (ACE, 1993).

Demographic changes and the increased cost of higher education have caused senior institutions to become increasingly dependent on community college transfer students. In some cases, more than half of the senior class at four-year colleges began their college work in community college (Melander & Robertson, 1992). Issues of transferability of course work and transfer student preparedness to do upper-level four-year college work are becoming increasingly important.

According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (1993), there were 1,480 two-year colleges as of 1994, with 5,404, 815 students in attendance at publicly supported two-year colleges. Approximately 22 percent of community college students transfer to four-year institutions with the intent of completing a baccalaureate degree (Cohen, 1993; Goff, 2003). These numbers indicate that transfer is of great importance on the community college campus. “Transfer is important because the community colleges serve as the point of first entry to higher education for many students who would not otherwise be able to attend college. More than one third of the people beginning college in America begin in a community college and the figures are much higher for members of minority groups. These institutions are an essential component of a democratic system of higher education—one that seeks to acculturate the citizenry and to make opportunity for further education available to all,” (Cohen, 1984). To facilitate the success of transferring students, two-year community colleges have an obligation to ensure that students receive appropriate and accurate instruction and advice (Eaton, 1988).

### *Admission Policies and Practices*

The most important question for institutions with selective freshman admission policies is what are the requirements of applicants seeking admission with advanced standing? In other words, what are the expectations of transfer students? Requirements may include making up high school deficiencies in prescribed subjects, completing a specific number of transfer credits, earning a certain grade point average in courses for which transfer credit may be awarded, and demonstrating certain proficiencies by means of proficiency and placement tests rather than course grades.

The lack of preparation of freshman who are recent high school graduates has lead many public and private colleges and universities to raise freshman admission standards and requirements, usually by requiring candidates to complete a prescribed number of units in English, mathematics, and more recently a foreign language. Other standards include high school grade point average, class rank and test scores on SAT or ACT exams. These new admission requirements are creating problems for transfer students because of the uncertainty about what is to be required of them for advanced standing who were unsuccessful in meeting the requirements on graduation from high school or who graduated before the latest requirements were implemented.

Another problem concerns admission into “limited access” or “controlled” programs where the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number who can be enrolled because of limited resources. Although some schools are battling declining enrollments, others continue to have more qualified freshman and transfer applicants than they are able to accept. Thus, these colleges and universities are able to provide applicants for advanced standing only limited access to such professional degree

programs as engineering, business administration, architecture, certain communication programs and other career fields that are attractive to undergraduate students. The problem is often two-fold: additional requirements that transfer applicants must meet in order to be considered for admission and the uncertainty about admission even if they meet these additional requirements.

A related issue deals with the exceptions to stated admission requirements and standards that may be made for transfer applicants or for specific groups such as under-represented minorities or economically disadvantaged applicants. This matter involves both size and characteristics of the transfer group to be admitted as exceptions and the nature of the waivers allowed.

The last area of concern relative to admission policies and practices focuses on the role of the associate degree. More specifically, when the associate degree serves as a means of guaranteed admission, the awarding of junior standing, and full credit transfer together with contractual and other types of agreements. Many transfer and articulation agreements require the completion of an associate degree while other advanced standings are based on individual course evaluations.

To facilitate the success of transferring students, two-year community colleges have an obligation to ensure that students receive appropriate and accurate instruction, information, and advice (Eaton, 1988). Part of this information should include common admission requirements for transfer students. One way to disseminate this information is through advising. For the purpose of this study, advising refers to administering appropriate guidance and/or recommendations to students for developing an academic

plan, which will help students accomplish their educational and career goals. The quality of academic advising is a critical factor particularly for transfer students.

*An Overview of the History and Importance of Academic Advising*

Advising has existed in one form or another and has been an accepted and recognized institutional activity on campuses of institutions of higher learning for several centuries. The value and importance of advising has been demonstrated repeatedly through the successful graduation of countless alumni. The origins of advising have been traced back to the founding of Harvard College in 1636 and extended through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Frost, 2000). In 1876, Johns Hopkins initiated the first system of faculty advisers. In 1889, President Daniel Gilman appointed the first chief of faculty advisers. This appointment provided official recognition of the important institutional need for academic counseling and advising (Cowley, 1949). Freshman advisers were appointed at Harvard in 1888 because of the increased size and elective additions to the curriculum, which necessitated closer attention to undergraduate guidance (Rudolph, 1990).

There is little doubt that the rapid growth of institutions of higher education in America is unique in the history of higher education (Mueller, 1961). Academic advising reflects this growth in a variety of settings, including small, liberal arts colleges, state universities, church-supported schools, municipal institutions, and technical and community colleges. Academic advising also reflects the diversity of students, which has come to include students from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The complexity of institutions and diversity of students have influenced the type of advising delivery systems that have been created to meet the unique needs of each institution (Gordon, 1990).

### *Advising Relative to Curricula*

Academic advising continued to evolve out of the need to interpret a more complex and varied curriculum. Curricula are considered to make a statement about one's continual growing knowledge and experience that is considered useful, appropriate, and/or relevant to the lives of educated men and women.

As the breadth and complexity of the curricula increased, the need for extended educational counseling became more critical. Following World War I, counselors were trained to complement faculty advising. Feelings and attitudes of students were taken into account in addition to a consideration of their aptitude for study (Rudolph, 1990).

After World War II, higher education experienced a tremendous growth in both student enrollment and the diversity of students. As a result, most campuses developed student-oriented programs in housing, financial aid, job placement, and counseling. Because faculty felt that academic advising was primarily an academic function that only a faculty member should perform, even though there was growing support for professional advisers, advising did not experience the same growth as other non-curricular activities (Grites, 1979). Grites (1979) also noted that during the post World War II period, faculty were primarily responsible for academic advising by almost a four-to-one margin as compared to nonfaculty or professional advisers.

During the 1950's, as student enrollment continued to grow, faculty began to limit their energies toward advising (Seim, 1994). They chose instead to involve themselves more in institutionally rewarded activities such as consultation, committee work, institutional governance, publishing, and research. In the 1960's and early 1970's, student unrest affected all aspects of higher education, most notably the university

curriculum. Faculty advisers could no longer simply sign class cards. They now virtually had to construct the general curriculum for each student. The responsibilities of the faculty required much more knowledge of the university curriculum; i.e., availability of courses, student needs, and abilities. At the same time, faculty were expected to fulfill their roles as teachers, developers of the institutional curriculum, researchers, and publishers (Gordon, 1990).

### *Focus on Student Retention*

In the second half of the 1970's, as enrollments declined, student retention became a primary focus of administrators. Recruitment efforts then and now brought an increasingly diversified student population. Minority students, older students, academically under-prepared students, and other nontraditional students began enrolling in far greater numbers.

During this period, the advising process had been an important element in the retention of these students (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979). Institutions began to concentrate on the quality of education that they were providing because they faced a more competitive market for students. One way to provide this quality was through academic advising via making use of the best possible resources with the assistance of faculty for students.

Attitudes towards academic advising changed very little until the 1950's (Grites, 1979). Until that time, advising was treated as a prescriptive, administrative activity where faculty approved certain courses for students. Afterwards, there was an increased emphasis building on interpersonal relationships, which had been a counseling function in the 1960's. The students of the 1970's prompted a need to address students'

psychological development, social responsibilities, and vocational interests. The result was a new developmental emphasis on advising.

### *Developmental Advising*

One of the most important aspects recognized in the field of advising in the 1970's and 1980's was developmental advising. The theoretical frameworks set forth by William Perry, Arthur Chickering, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, and others, as well as the vocational theories of Donald Super, John Holland and David Tiedeman, were adopted to personalize advising in an approach that went far beyond the traditional advising agenda. Students were recognized as individuals with unique needs and concerns, and advising practices were expanded to include educational and vocational goal setting as well as the traditional scheduling of classes (Gordon, 1990). Academic advising evolved into a decision-making process that was ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and adviser (Winston et al., 1984).

The growth and significance of academic advising has grown to such proportions that in the spring of 1979, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was chartered, with a membership of 429 individuals. In 1981, the first edition of the *NACADA Journal* was published, and in 1989 the National Clearing House for Academic Advising was established at The Ohio State University. The latter was to serve as a repository of research on academic advising (Beatty, 1991).

NACADA and the Council for the Development of Standards established national Standards for Developmental Academic Advising in 1983 for Student Services/Development Programs (Council of Academic Standards, 1997). These professional standards, once implemented and practiced, were intended to bring a sense

of accountability and integrity to the entire field of academic advising in higher education.

The goals for academic advising programs often include the development of students' self-understanding, life and career goals, and critical thinking skills in addition to acclimating students to the university culture and procedures (CAS, 1997; Habley, 2000; NACADA, 1994). These goals mirror many institutional general education goals. While it may be difficult to determine precisely where teaching ends and advising begins, the individual nature of the advising relationship provides for more personalized attention to each student's specific developmental process (Crookston, 1972; Frost, 1991a).

#### *Student Satisfaction and Retention*

As enrollments began to decline in the 1970's and throughout the 1980's, student satisfaction and retention became major focal points for many universities, with proper academic advising regarded as an integral key to keeping students in school. Carstensen and Silberhorn (1979) first highlighted this in the First National Survey on Academic Advising. The survey found that retention rates increased twenty-five percent or more for some universities that had improved their academic advising programs.

Academic advising has made significant progress since its beginning in the junior colleges. No matter what their official or unofficial title, advisers have cared for the students' intellectual, physical, social, and moral well being from the beginning of higher education in America to today's complex and comprehensive advising structures. As long as there are changes in universities across America, academic advisers will face challenges brought about by accompanying changes in university standards, curriculum, and changes in the personal views held by faculty members, administrators, and students.

Crockett (1978) refers to advising as the “cornerstone” of student retention and stresses that the institutions must “recognize that academic advising is an integral part of the higher education process, not a minor support service only tangentially related to the purposes of the institution” (p.29). For Crockett at least, advising is not just a service an institution provides for altruistic reasons but rather is an important part of the framework an institution utilizes as it goes about its purpose of educating students.

### *Benefits of Quality Advising*

The most frequently cited benefit of quality academic advising is student retention (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). In fact, Astin’s (1993) longitudinal studies of student outcomes found that “practically all involvement variables showing a positive association with retention suggest high involvement with faculty, fellow students and academic work,” (p. 196). Specifically, faculty-student interaction, talking with faculty outside of class, and being a guest in a faculty member’s home were among the top five factors associated with student retention. Tinto (1993) claimed that quality-advising services were important for all students, not just those in academic trouble, and that good advising is an essential component in any effective retention program. Glennen (1983) commented, “An effective academic advisement program will be the prime factor in increasing student retention during the 1980s and 1990s” (p.59). He also claimed that academic advising with emphasis on student satisfaction and retention would become the foremost weapon against declining enrollments. In an important study, Noel (1983) noted that institutions with highly successful programs emphasizing academic persistence and achievement of learner outcomes (as measured by scores on the College Outcomes Measures Program scores) placed significantly more

emphasis on academic advising and orientation than did institutions with less successful persistence rates. His research also noted that the number of faculty with doctoral degrees, student/faculty ratio, library holdings, and accreditation had little impact on retention.

Astin (1993) found student-faculty interaction had a positive association with students' self-concept. Alexitch's (1997) study of student help-seeking attitudes supports the role of advising in enhancing personal development. The study found students who need help are least likely to seek out support services on campus. In addition, senior students reported they would have made more effective decisions had they received more guidance early in their academic experience (Alexitch, 1997). According to McGillin (2000), only one study since 1979 has failed to support the positive correlation between improved advising and retention.

The outcomes attributed to advising are directly related to the educational mission of many institutions (Ender et al., 1984; Habley, 2000). Between 1983 and 1998, American College Testing, Inc. (ACT) and NACADA sponsored national surveys of academic advising (Habley & Morales, 1998). Each survey asked institutions to what extent advising services were designed to achieve the standards developed by NACADA and eventually published as the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS, 1997) in Higher Education. Institutions benefit from increased retention and efficient degree completion by students in terms of both internal financial support and efforts for external fundraising/alumni support (Farren, 1995). Academic quality initiatives involving student-faculty interaction serve to increase the prestige of the university and provide greater satisfaction for faculty (Wiseman & Sanders, 1988).

It appears from the literature that advising has historically and traditionally been a part of higher education and that its importance to institutions has been brought about by a variety of divergent concerns. These concerns range from the inclusion of advising in the educational processes of the institution to a more practical concern for retaining students. Advising and retention concerns are especially crucial to students transferring from a community college to a four-year university. Advising is instrumental for a smooth transition.

### *Prevailing Advising Systems*

In attempts to address these multiple concerns, individual campuses have developed various forms of advising systems. Prior research indicates that these advising systems take on different forms at different institutions, utilize different personnel within the institutional structure, and achieve varying degrees of effectiveness (Bostaph & Moore, 1980; O'Banion, Fordyce & Goodwin, 1972; Teague, 1977). The two prevailing models of academic advising most often described are the prescriptive and the developmental model. These models represent the poles on a continuum defined by the nature of the student-advisor relationship and the tasks associated with the role of the advisor (Crookston, 1972; Kramer, 2000; O'Banion, 1972). The model receiving the most emphasis varies widely between campuses. Most institutions use a combination of models, varying the approach for specific student populations or colleges within the university (Habley, 2000; King, 1995; Kramer, 1995).

Prescriptive advising is a traditional approach where the advisor is the authority providing answers to students' questions. The advisor is responsible for providing accurate information and the student is responsible for acting in accordance with the

advice. Assumptions underlying the prescriptive model include (a) students are lacking motivation and/or maturity, (b) students are motivated by extrinsic rewards, and (c) the advisor controls the decision-making and evaluation process (Crookston, 1972; Ender, Winston & Miller, 1984). While the prescriptive model is appropriate for certain populations or specific issues, it may oversimplify questions that are symptomatic of a larger issue (Crookston, 1972). Habley (1994) contended that prescriptive models are likely to fail because they focus upon course choice and scheduling rather than the goals and values underlying decisions about persistence and program choice.

Developmental advising emerged in the 1970s when Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972) published separate articles on the integration of developmental theory into the practice of academic advising. Various life/cycle, moral/ethical, and cognitive/social development theories formed the philosophy of the developmental advising model (Creamer, 2000; Frost, 1991a). However, integration of career and identity development theory with academic planning has often dominated the practice of developmental advising (Erdman, 2004; Habley, 1984; McCalla-Wriggins, 2000).

Since developmental advising encourages students to utilize critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they make academic decisions, it is often described as a natural extension of teaching (Crookston, 1972; Frost, 1991a; Kramer, 2000). Anecdotal reports and empirical studies have found relationships between the use of developmental advising models and the attainment of higher-order thinking and moral development goals (Astin, 1993; Ender et al, 1984; Frost, 1991b; Habley, 1995a; Kelly, 1995).

Creamer (2000) defined five beliefs that form the scope of developmental advising as an extension of teaching. The beliefs are similar to the principles of good

practice in undergraduate education proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and provide the basis for Kramer's (2000) taxonomy for advising by academic status. First, the purpose of advising is learning and development. The purpose is shared by all educators and includes in-class and out-of-class activities. Second, active or collaborative teaching strategies should be applied in the advising relationship. Strategies that build on the social nature of learning often lead to more effective advising outcomes. Third, the context of advising calls for the formation and achievement of life goals. The structure of higher education will drive the goal-setting process. Fourth, advising takes a holistic approach to career and life planning. Finally, advising content is constructed knowledge about educational and life plans. While many students may follow a similar education plan, some aspects of each plan are unique to the student's goals and situation.

O'Banion's (1972) developmental advising model outlines five dimensions of practice in academic advising as well as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for each. The five dimensions include (a) exploration of life goals, (b) exploration of vocational goals, (c) program choice, (d) course choice, and (e) scheduling courses. O'Banion's developmental advising model requires advisors to be knowledgeable of student characteristics, developmental theory, university programs, and the success of past graduates. As a result of the wide variety of skills, knowledge, and attitudes outlined in the model, O'Banion (1972) suggested an advising system where different dimensions of the model would be delivered by different professionals. O'Banion (1972) noted, "... who does advising is probably not as important as the philosophy of the institution that supports the academic advising program and the commitment and understanding with which the counselor or instructor approaches the process" (p. 68).

Crookston (1972) contrasted prescriptive and developmental advising on 10 dimensions. Crookston dealt primarily with beliefs about students and the advisor's role in decision-making authority, whereas, O'Banion (1972) provided guidance in how to assess or develop advisors. Together they formed the framework that guides advising practice today (CAS, 1997; Creamer & Scott, 2000; NACADA, 1994). Grites and Gordon (2000) noted prescriptive and developmental advising models describe a continuum, rather than a dichotomous relationship. The two approaches may coexist at the same campus and may be used by individual advisors depending on the student, institution, and program characteristics. The final three phases of the developmental model may look very "prescriptive". Crookston's approach, where the student participates in decision making, is a very different experience than the prescriptive approach where the advisor makes the decisions. The outcome of choosing courses may be the same, but the process by which they are chosen requires students to practice thinking and problem-solving skills. Crookston and O'Banion introduced their approaches at a time when advisor's signatures were required on many things, which reduced advising to a clerical or logistical process (Grites & Gordon, 2000). Crookston never proposed that faculty advisors were doing a poor job, rather, he sought to create a paradigm shift where advising would be seen as a legitimate extension of teaching and research (Erdman, 2004; Wade & Yoder, 1995).

While the developmental model has received a high level of praise, the actual practice of advising has been slow to change in response (Habley & Morales, 1998; O'Banion, 1994), particularly at large research-intensive institutions (Habley, 2000). Frost (2000) noted the culture of higher education is slow to change, but some criticize

the developmental model as an added strain on faculty who have little background or interest in student development theory and practice (Hemwall & Tratche, 1999). Others have found that the strain may be a result of limited faculty development in the advising role (Grites & Gordon, 2000; Kopera, 1998; Ryan 1995) or that their workload simply does not allow the time necessary to practice developmental advising (Erdman, 2004; Kelly, 1995; Seim, 1994).

### *Advising Delivery Models*

King (1995) identified four key factors that influence the delivery of advising services. The factors include institutional mission, student population, faculty, and complexity of institutional programs and policies. Three additional factors that may influence delivery are budget, facilities, and organizational structure. The faculty involvement factor is particularly sensitive to administrative priorities and the extent to which advising is included in the reward structure of the university.

King (1995) argued the strengths and limitations of each delivery system based on criteria such as accessibility to advisors, priority of advising to the advisor, advisor's knowledge of the major and student development, training, cost, and credibility with faculty and staff. These issues must be weighed within the larger context of the university and the advising professionals available on campus (Pardee, 2000). Often advising occurs using some combination of faculty, professional advisors, counselors, peer advisors, and paraprofessionals. In many delivery systems, more than one type of advisor may be utilized. Faculty, however, play a vital role in nearly all advising systems.

Habley (1988) identified seven delivery systems for advising which have been used to report data in ACT's National Surveys of Academic Advising. The seven systems include: (1) faculty-only, (2) supplementary, (3) split, (4) dual, (5) total intake, (6) satellite, and (7) self-contained. The use of these systems has been tracked for more than 10 years at a variety of institutions. The delivery patterns that exist between institutions can largely be explained by the institutional factors identified by King (1995).

#### *Faculty-only*

The faculty-only system involves assigning students to specific faculty members for advising. Typically, students are assigned based on their major. Undeclared or undecided majors, if permitted at the institution, are assigned to faculty who either volunteer or have a specific designation for undecided students. In this system, the supervision of advisors is decentralized. This system has been most prevalent at private institutions. Between 1987 and 1997, this method of delivery decreased slightly overall. However, it has declined significantly among four-year public institutions from 32% in 1987 to only 15% in 1997 (Habley & Morales, 1998).

#### *Supplementary System*

The supplementary system is similar to the faculty-only system except that there is an office that acts as a central clearinghouse and referral resource. The office does not assign advisors, but may provide resources and advisor training. Supervision and evaluation of advising is still the responsibility of the academic department. The use of the supplementary system has remained constant overall but has declined by eight percent at public four-year institutions (Habley & Morales, 1998).

### *Split System*

The split system divides advising responsibilities between faculty advisors and a professional advising office. Students are assigned to either faculty or the advising office based upon specific characteristics. Often the higher risk students are assigned to the advising office until certain pre-determined requirement(s) are met such as declaring a major, attaining a certain grade point average, or completing specific courses. Once the requirements are met, the student is assigned to a faculty advisor. Use of this delivery system increased by about five percent overall between 1987 and 1997. Much of this growth was reported by public four-year institutions between 1992 and 1997 (Habley & Morales, 1998). This change may be the result of the student engagement and retention studies that were published in the early 1990s. Such studies prompted campuses to recognize and target “at risk” student populations for specialized advising services (Frost, 2000).

### *Dual Model*

The dual model assigns two advisors to each student. A faculty advisor provides information on the student’s academic program while an advising office provides more developmental advising and handles registration processes. This system is utilized by less than five percent of institutions in any category (Habley & Morales, 1998).

### *Total Intake System*

The total intake system assigns all students to a centralized advising office for a specific time period or until certain criteria are met. After the initial intake advising is complete, the student is transferred to a faculty advisor in his/her chosen major. This

system is more prevalent at public four-year institutions overall, but it is still the system of choice at fewer than 10% of the public four-year institutions.

#### *Satellite System*

The satellite system decentralizes advising to the individual colleges in the university setting. Each college has an office responsible for advising all majors in that college. These satellite offices may or may not involve faculty as advisors. In 1997, this system was found in six percent of institutions overall, but it was the system of choice for 14% of the public four-year institutions. The use of satellite systems by public four-year institutions increased at the same rate that supplemental systems decreased in those 10 years (Habley & Morales, 1998).

#### *Self-contained System*

The self-contained system involves all advising taking place in a centralized location. A dean or director who is responsible for all advising functions on campus administers the unit. Faculty are rarely involved in advising when the self-contained system is in place. In 1997, this model was used by 12% of institutions. It is most prevalent at public two-year institutions (27%) and least prevalent at public four-year institutions (2%) (Habley & Morales, 1998).

#### *Influence of Technology*

The recent explosion of distance education and the increasing availability of online academic information has created new challenges for advising. Fields (2001) compared computer-assisted and manual academic services at Grambling State University in relationship to how these models affected student success the first year. The study found that the use of degree audit and computerized registration systems

eliminated long lines during registration and freed up the advisors and counselors to discuss more developmental issues, greatly reducing their time with reading printouts and searching for courses.

Automated advising tools have decreased the clerical nature of the process, allowing more time for developmental advising but leaving many advisors and students questioning the purpose of advising (Erdman, 2004; Kramer & McCauley, 1995; McCauley, 2000; Teitelbaum, 2000). Automated systems are faster and more accurate for prescriptive advising tasks, but humans are needed to achieve developmental advising goals (Kramer & McCauley, 1995; McCauley 2000). The increased availability of information on computers and preferences for electronic communication (Erdman, 2004; Steel & Gordon, 2001) are driving a new kind of advising paradigm shift. Technology has enhanced the advising function in many ways; however, there still remain a number of issues relative to the role of an advisor.

#### *Issues Related to Current Advisor Roles and Perceptions of these Roles*

Many institutions of higher education expect faculty to have some advising responsibilities. Few, however, receive formal training regarding expected outcomes for advising students. According to Habley and Morales (1998), ninety-eight percent of institutions expect faculty to advise. Despite this high expectation to perform the advising role, only about one-third of campuses provide training and development in this area. Of those institutions providing development, few require faculty participation in it. Less than one-third of campuses include advising in the evaluation and reward structure (Boyer, 1990; Erdman, 2004; Habley & Morales, 1998).

### *Advisor Training and Development*

Ryan (1995) added that one individual is no longer able to maintain the large volume of information needed to fulfill teaching, research, and student advising needs. Curriculum is increasingly more complex and fluid in nature. Career options for specific majors have grown and the needs of the student population have become more varied (Erdman, 2004; Teitelbaum, 2000). Advisors cannot possibly learn all the details and provide all the services students need, but they must have knowledge of available support and referral services (Erdman, 2004; Ryan, 1995; Upcraft & Stephens, 2000; White, 1995). “Students want to receive specific and accurate information from their advisors, and it is important that we either have the answers or that we know how and where to get them” (Ryan, 1995, p. 39).

Many advising resource articles offer lists and short descriptions of useful advising tools for advising students (Erdman, 2004; Kramer & McCauley, 1995; McCauley, 2000; White, 1995). These tools, however, are increasingly more technical creating a need for more time-intensive and formalized training. The learning curve required to keep pace with student needs, technological advances, and remain current within the discipline is creating role stress for many faculty and academic advisors (Kopera, 1998; McGillen, 2000; Sotto, 1998). Faculty, in particular, report frustration with the lack of development for the advising role, most notably in the communication and developmental issues that would help them better understand students (Erdman, 2004; Habley, 1998; Kelly, 1995; King, 2000; Ryan, 1995; Seim, 1994).

### *Defining the Role of Academic Advisors*

Nearly all institutions of higher education require that faculty have some advising responsibilities. Unfortunately, few receive formal instruction regarding expected outcomes for advising students. As each faculty member develops their personal expectations, the advising role changes within and between institutions (Habley & Morales, 1998). In the absence of clearly articulated goals for advising, students and administrators also develop personal expectations for advising which may not match faculty expectations (Mendelsohn, 1991; Stolar, 1994).

While some studies concluded that faculty are more comfortable with prescriptive advising tasks, (Mendelsohn, 1991; Stolar, 1994), others concluded that advising procedures limited advisors to prescriptive roles (Kelly, 1995; Kopera, 1998). In separate studies conducted by Kelly and Kopera faculty made statements consistent with developmental advising models, but reported frustration with the process largely due to a lack of mentoring or training for advising. Seim (1994) found tenured faculty were more concerned with keeping office hours, monitoring progress, and assisting with career planning. Templeton et al. (2002) concluded faculty viewed advising primarily as course selection and career counseling. Erdman (2004) concluded faculty believe the advisor role should focus on mentoring students in their academic decision making rather than processing paperwork that could be the responsibility of support staff or the students. Additionally, faculty are comfortable with their advising load and the general expectations for advising, but feel advising effectiveness suffers from competing demands in the overall workload. In all of the studies reviewed, faculty reported that a lack of training and support for advising limited their ability to perform advising to their

personal expectations. Creamer and Scott (2000) maintained that effective advisors develop in systems where the institutional mission, resource allocations and evaluation standards reinforce consistent role expectations.

There is no single or universal definition for academic advising. Rather, scholars who have closely examined the advising and transfer functions within higher education offer many varied definitions. One common concept is that advising is a dyadic relationship between students and their advisors. The perceived relationship between student and advisor and the role of an advisor frames the basis for this descriptive analysis of the transfer advising function in higher education and the barriers that inhibit a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university. Students planning to transfer from a community college to a four-year university depend on reliable, accurate advice. Advisors play an essential role in the transfer process. How they perceive their role can either facilitate or inhibit a successful transfer from a community college to a four-year university.

#### *Conceptual Framework for Study*

This study focuses on the perceptions of advisors and counselors who work directly with transfer students, specifically those who attend or have attended a community college and choose to transfer to a four-year college or university in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree. Advising is a dyadic relationship between students and their advisors. Since both faculty and non-faculty play a significant role in the advising process and in many respects control both the relationship and the process, it is important to ascertain and understand their perceptions and attitudes towards advising and their role in the advising process.

For the purpose of this study, the most fitting definition of the transfer process is a combination of definitions provided by Eaton (1996). Eaton offers one of the more comprehensive descriptions of transfer: ... the movement of students from one institution to another. Students take certain packages of academic experiences from one institution and request that another institution formally recognize these packages—whether made up of courses, programs, or degrees. Transfer is a complex activity involving students, faculty, administrators, at least two institutions, many departmental interests and perhaps even state regulations (p. 559).

All of the concepts introduced for advising students, especially transfer students, may be synthesized to create the framework that serves as the foundation for this descriptive analysis. The four essential elements underpinning the framework are: (1) the joining of two or more segments or sectors of education; (2) the movement of students from one institution of education to another; (3) the dissemination of accurate and effective advice; and (4) the required participation of many interested and involved parties in the transfer process.

The theoretical concepts that best support the structural framework for this study include student choice theory and student development theory. Early work by Chapman (1981) and Litten (1982) set the foundation of study of college student choice, describing it as a developmental process. Jackson (1982) along with Litten (1982) suggests the process of choice has three phases—predisposition, search and choice. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) explored related literature on student choice in an attempt to explain how factors interact to influence students' attitudes toward college and shape the selection of a specific institution. Rosovsky (1990) was clear that students form

perceptions based on what they know about universities, what they have read, and what others have told them.

Student development theory is an idea, which has its roots in the progressive education movement of the 1920s (Strange, 1994). In many respects, all theories of student development can best be summarized with the two simple words first suggested by Sanford (1962)—challenge and support. Without challenge, leading to dissonance, learning and growth cannot occur. Without support for the individual responding to these challenges, learning and growth may be stunted.

Successful advising and transfer result in smooth student flow from level to level and between institutions with a minimal loss of time and credit for students who opt for this kind of educational pattern but with opportunities provided for others who start late, stop out, and change direction en route to the baccalaureate degree. This kind of success is highly dependent upon three basic conditions: 1) leadership and commitment on the part of each institution's chief academic officer; 2) wide dissemination of information about transfer programs that is clear, concise, accurate and current and; 3) goodwill and optimistic attitudes and perceptions on the part of all parties involved in the transfer function, with specific emphasis on advising practices.

### *Summary*

The history of academic advising is closely linked to the history of higher education and the evolution of the community college and can be subdivided into several eras. Throughout these eras, the basic goal of enhancing learning has been related to the nature of students' involvement with their teachers. Prescriptive and developmental advising models describe the poles on a continuum measuring the nature of control in the

student-advisor relationship and the tasks associated with advising (Crookston, 1972; Erdman, 2004; Grites & Gordon, 2000; O'Banion, 1972). Most institutions use a combination of advising models, varying the approach for specific student populations or colleges within the university (Habley, 2000; Kramer, 1995). The most frequently cited benefit of quality academic advising is student retention (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Institutions benefit from increased retention and efficient degree completion by students, in terms of both internal financial support and efforts for external support, such as fundraising and alumni support (Farren, 1995).

Despite the amount of information known about the positive effects of developmental advising, little change has occurred in the practice of advising students (Erdman, 2004; Frost, 2000; O'Banion, 1994). Colleges and universities continue to use a variety of advising techniques with prescriptive advising as the most prevalent. Crockett (1988) noted that advisor training and development is even less prevalent than faculty advisor evaluations. While faculty at nearly all institutions of higher education have some advising responsibilities, their satisfaction and expectation levels vary considerably (Habley & Morales, 1998). Creamer and Scott (2000) proposed that the role of advisor should be defined by availability, knowledge and helpfulness.

For the purpose of this study, the concepts of student choice theory and student development theory help delimit the concept of developmental advising. Developmental advising applies a more holistic approach as opposed to the commonly used prescriptive model of advising students. The synthesis of all these concepts can best be illustrated in chapter three—the methodology for this study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This study has three primary purposes. First, the study seeks to determine the relationship between advisor perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of academic advising. The second purpose is to explore how transfer advisor perceptions differ based upon professional characteristics of transfer advisors. The final purpose is to identify advisors' perceived barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university.

Chapter three presents a detailed description of the methodology and procedures for conducting this study. The chapter is divided into the following five sections: (1) Research Questions/Type of Research, (2) Sample Selection, (3) Instrumentation, (4) Data Collection Procedures, and (5) Data Analysis.

#### *Research Questions*

The following research questions guide this study.

1. What is the relationship between advisors' perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of academic advising?
2. What are the perceived administrative barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university?
3. What are the perceived similarities and differences among the two-year advisors in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?

4. What are the perceived similarities and differences among the four-year university advisors in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?
5. Is there a difference between what community college and four-year university advisors perceive as the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?

#### *Type of Research*

This study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approach. Though not as concise as quantitative research, qualitative research, according to Sharan Merriam (1998), is still a very valid and reliable method of analyzing data and drawing conclusions based on a single or combination of different types of qualitative studies. Rather than focusing on numerical analysis, qualitative research is more concerned with the human element, which includes observing, interacting/interviewing, and analyzing documentation written by other individuals exploring a common interest. Qualitative studies typically focus on human characteristics such as attitudes, perceptions and behaviors and are more psychological and/or sociological in nature.

Qualitative research is historically linked to phenomenology and symbolic interaction. Carr and Kemmis (1986) offer a helpful typology that distinguishes among three basic orientations of educational research: positivist, interpretive and critical. A brief explanation of each form will show the relevancy of using qualitative research in this study. In positivist forms of research, education is considered the object, phenomenon, or delivery system to be studied. Knowledge gained through scientific and experimental research is objective and quantifiable. Here reality is stable, observable,

and measurable. In interpretive research, education is viewed as a process and school is a lived experience. Understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive hypothesis- or theory-generating mode of inquiry. In this instance, multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals. In critical research, education is considered to be a social institution designed for social and cultural reproduction and transformation (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

All forms of qualitative research share some common characteristics (Merriam, 1998). One is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). He or she is responsive to the context and can adapt techniques to the circumstances. The total context can be considered; what is known about the situation can be expanded through sensitivity to nonverbal aspects; the researcher can process data immediately, can clarify and summarize as the study evolves, and can explore anomalous responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

A second common characteristic of qualitative research is that it usually involves fieldwork of some sort. The researcher must physically go to the people, setting, site, or institution, in order to observe behavior in its natural setting. Additionally, since qualitative studies focus on process, meaning and understanding, the resulting product is richly descriptive. Words and graphics rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

A richly descriptive study attempts to reveal patterns associated with a specific condition without emphasis on pre-specified hypotheses. Sometimes these types of studies are called hypothesis-generating studies (to contrast them with hypothesis-testing studies). Descriptive studies have a primary goal of assessing a sample at one specific

point in time without trying to make inferences or causal statements. In general, there are three primary reasons to conduct a descriptive study: 1. to identify areas for further research; 2. to help in planning resource allocation (needs assessment), and 3. to provide informal diagnostic information about a condition. (NEDARC, 2007) Descriptive studies are helpful in revealing patterns and connections that might otherwise go unnoticed. In a descriptive study, the emphasis is typically on estimation rather than testing. Some of the quantities a researcher might want to estimate include: 1. the prevalence of a condition, (barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university) 2. the natural history of a condition (how these existing barriers developed), 3. the resources required to treat a condition (recommendations to minimize or possibly eliminate these barriers), and 4. attitudes and perceptions about the condition (advisors' attitudes and perceptions at the selected institutions under study).

#### *Sample Selection*

This study is based largely upon the advising research conducted by Seim (1994) and Erdman (2004), both of whom studied faculty perceptions of advising. This descriptive study uses a combination qualitative/quantitative survey design to measure adviser, counselor and administrator perceptions of their role in advising transfer students at a community college and a four-year university.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Denzin (1978) recommend theoretical sampling for qualitative research. This form of sampling involves the purposeful selection of those people who offer the most theoretical relevance to the situation and concepts under study. When comparison groups are used, theoretical sampling serves the purpose of providing “simultaneous maximization or minimization of both the differences and the similarities

of data that impact the categories being studied. Control over similarities and differences is vital for discovering categories and for developing and relating their theoretical properties—all necessary for the development of an emergent theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 55).

The sample selection for this study consists of two groups. One group consists of faculty and non-faculty advisors who work closely with transfer students at a multi-campus community college. The second group consists of faculty and non-faculty advisors who advise transfer students at a private four-year liberal arts university. The specifics of how these individuals were selected and contacted are detailed below.

In February 2008, permission to survey transfer advisers, counselors and administrators was sought from the chief academic officers at Steel City Community College and Three Rivers University, whose student body is comprised largely of students transferring from the community college. Once permission to administer the survey was granted, the survey accompanied by a cover letter was electronically mailed to select individuals at both the community college and the four-year university. Efforts to increase the return rate included a separate approval notification email from the Provost and Dean of Students at Three Rivers University and Steel City Community College respectively.

In addition to the survey, open-ended questions were administered to individuals who completed the survey and volunteered to answer these additional questions. The additional open-ended questions provided rich, contextual information that allowed individuals to present their experiences, perceptions and reasoning in ways meaningful to them. This information further supports their responses to the survey.

### *Instrumentation*

The primary survey instrument for this study was adapted from the survey used by Erdman (2004). Permission to replicate all and modify parts of Erdman's (2004) advising survey was granted directly from the survey author in September 2007. The survey contains 42 questions. The items appearing on the survey reflect research issues related to advisor roles, training, knowledge, and advising with technology. The survey questions are designed to address these three areas: 1) advising tasks and skills, 2) barriers to effective advising, and 3) advisor characteristics.

### *Survey Scales*

The survey instrument is divided into three sections. Section I contains 14 questions associated with the five dimensions of O'Bannion's (1972) developmental advising model. Each item statement is rated on two five-point Likert scales. First, respondents rated items based on how much the statement "should" be part of the advisor/counselor's role. This scale refers to the importance of each dimension. Second, respondents rated the same items based on how frequently the statement is "actually" performed by the advisor/counselor. This scale refers to the practice of each dimension. For both scales, 1 indicates the lowest level of importance of practice and 5 indicates the highest level of importance or practice. Section II contains 15 barrier statements (items 15 – 29). Advisors/counselors indicated the strength of agreement with each stated barrier using a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicates strong disagreement (not a barrier) and 5 indicates strong agreement (is a barrier). Section III (items 30 – 41) asks for information about the respondent's background and general opinions about the advising system. The

last item (# 42) provides space for open-ended comments. A copy of the survey is included in the appendix.

### *Verification*

Validating the credibility and reliability of data is vital to the acceptance of the research, including the methodology, analysis, and finally the findings and conclusions presented.

Paralleling the need to validate information, Marshall & Rossman (1995) propose four criteria or alternative constructs—as referred to by Guba and Lincoln (1981)—that lend credence to conducting qualitative research. The first construct is credibility, which ensures accuracy of information. The second is transferability, which sustains generalizability of the findings. The third construct is dependability, which accounts for changing conditions in the phenomenon under study as well as changes resulting from an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. The final construct is confirm-ability, which captures the traditional concept of objectivity. This implies that someone can confirm the findings of the study other than the researcher.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

The data was collected during the 2007 – 2008 academic year. For the purpose of this study, descriptive methods for data collection and analysis were used. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe and develop an understanding for a situation, event, group or interaction (Lock, et al, 1991). Detailed descriptions of context and the content of the respondents' reactions form the basis for inductive rather than deductive forms of analysis (Lock, et al, 1991). The focus of attention is on the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Collecting data using this method minimizes some of the threats to

validity and reliability inherent in the survey and interview methods. James Spradley (1979) has described in some detail structured strategies for data collection and analysis anchored in hands-on work with actual data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Spradley's methods allow other researchers to examine easily the data and the way in which conclusions have been drawn during analysis of the data.

A combination of descriptive inquiry was used in this study: 1) survey questionnaire, which attempts to determine "official" stances (Denzin, 1978; Spradley, 1979) and 2) open-ended questions which attempted to record what respondents recall about their personal experiences, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.

During the first quarter of 2008, permission to survey transfer advisers, counselors and administrators was sought from the chief academic officers at a select community college and four-year university, whose student body is comprised largely of students transferring from the community college. Shortly after permission to administer the survey was granted, the survey accompanied by a cover letter was electronically mailed to select individuals at both the Steel City Community College and Three Rivers University. A separate electronic approval notification was sent from the Provost/Dean of Faculty and the Dean of Students at Three Rivers University and Steel City Community College respectively to help maximize the return rate.

In addition to the survey, open-ended questions were administered to individuals who completed the survey and volunteered to answer the additional questions. The open-ended questions provide rich, contextual information that allow individuals to present their experiences, perceptions and reasoning in ways that are meaningful to them. This

information further supports their responses to the survey. A copy of the interview questions is included in the appendix.

Data collection was completed in early June 2008. Data analysis occurred between April and July of 2008. Summary results will be presented to the institutions upon request.

### *Data Analysis*

The method of data collection plays a critical role in this study. The researcher administered a survey followed by a series of short open-ended questions to relevant survey respondents. Through data analyses of the survey responses and the interviews, the researcher was able to draw inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics from the obtained data. The responses to the questions asked provided the fundamental theoretical basis for this study.

A survey analysis yields crude or general indices which suffice to indicate the concepts of the theory and to establish general relationships between the concepts (Denzin, 1978). These relationships in turn become the basis for suggesting hypotheses for the emerging theory supporting the need for identifying barriers inhibiting a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university.

The survey consists of forty-two short answer questions that were distributed to approximately one hundred and thirty staff and faculty members from both institutions. These individuals were persons who work within the following departments, Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Academic Advising. Each individual selected for the survey has an active role in the academic advising of students

in the following categories, traditional, non-traditional, native, transfer, and adult learners.

After administering the survey to the community college and the four-year university, the data collected was analyzed for basic concepts and ideologies common to both institutions. Once similarities had been established, a more in-depth analysis was conducted to identify common barriers and to determine the affect these barriers have on effective advising of mainly transfer students. A series of short open-ended questions were administered and answered by select members of both institutions in order to identify other barriers or issues not addressed or fully addressed through this survey.

Following the data collection, a system of analytic induction referred to by Spradley (1979) as domain analysis, was used to study the data for categories of information relevant to the concept being explored (advisors' perceptions of barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university). Data were used to look for patterns which illustrate objective and quantitative descriptions of informal diagnostic information communicated through the survey and the interviews.

### *Summary*

This descriptive study utilized a combination of quantitative survey and qualitative open-ended questions designed to assess advisor/counselor perceptions of their role in advising students transferring from a community college to a four-year university. The study builds upon previous research on academic advising with updated survey items added to reflect current transfer advising practices. All undergraduate advisors, counselors, and administrators who work directly with transfer students at the two selected institutions were included in the study. The five initial research questions

provide a fundamental guidance for collecting data, forming categories, identifying characteristics and barriers, and thus shaping the theoretical outcomes that ultimately emerge from the final stages of the data analysis described in-depth in chapter four.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on the characteristics of the sample under study, reporting of the statistical results and findings of the study and interpretations of the results. The chapter is organized as follows: characteristics and description of the sample, results and interpretation of the survey instrument, analysis of open-ended questions enlisting individual perceptions of current advising practices, and findings relevant to each research question. The chapter concludes with a summary. A general profile of the respondents is presented first followed by specific profiles based upon college or university affiliation. Of particular interest in this analysis are the areas of advisor characteristics, perceptions of advising practices and response ratings of barriers to effective advising contrasted between the community college and university advisors.

The study had three distinct purposes. First, the study sought to determine the relationship between advisor perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of academic advising. The second purpose was to explore how advisor perceptions differ between advisors in a community college and advisors in a four-year university based upon perceptions of advising tasks and skills, barriers to effective advising and professional characteristics. The final purpose was to identify advisors' perceived barriers to a smooth transition moving from a community college to a four-year university.

#### *Characteristics and Description of the Survey Instrument and Sample*

The sample for this study consisted of two groups. One group consisted of administrators, faculty and non-faculty who work closely with transfer students at a

multi-campus community college. The second group consisted of administrators, faculty and non-faculty who advise transfer students at a private four-year liberal arts university. The survey consisted of forty-two short answer questions that were distributed to a combined total of one hundred and thirty staff and faculty members from a two-year community college and a four-year university. These individuals were persons who work within the following departments, Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, Academic Advising and across academic disciplines. Each individual selected for the survey had an active role in the academic advising of students in the following categories: traditional, non-traditional, transfer, and adult learners.

The 42 items appearing on the survey reflect research issues related to adviser roles, training, knowledge, and advising with technology. The survey questions were designed to address these three areas: 1) advising tasks and skills, 2) barriers to effective advising, and 3) advisor characteristics. The survey instrument was divided into three sections.

Section I contains 14 questions associated with the five dimensions of O'Bannon's (1972) developmental advising model which focused on advising tasks and skills. Each item statement was rated on two five-point Likert scales. First, respondents rated items based on how much the statement "should" be part of the advisor/counselor's role. Second, respondents rated the same items based on how frequently the statement is "actually" performed by the advisor/counselor. For both scales, 1 indicated the lowest level of importance or practice and 5 indicated the highest level of importance or practice.

Section II contains 15 barrier statements (items 15 – 29). Respondents indicated the strength of agreement with each stated barrier using a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicated strong disagreement (not a barrier) and 5 indicated strong agreement (is a barrier).

Section III (items 30 – 41) asks for information about the respondent's background and general opinions about the advising system. The last item (42) provides space for open-ended comments. A series of 7 short open-ended questions were answered by a number of members from both the two-year and the four-year institutions who participated in the survey to further identify perceived barriers or issues not addressed or not fully addressed through the survey. Fourteen of the 22 respondents at Three Rivers University answered the open-ended questions and all 10 of the respondents at Steel City Community College voluntarily answered the additional open-ended questions. The answers to these open-ended questions are integrated throughout this chapter where they seem most relevant.

### *Response Frequency*

The total population under study consisted of 130 faculty and non-faculty members from both the two-year and four-year institutions of higher education. Ninety members were from the private four-year university and forty were from the community college. Table 1 reports the response frequency rate on the survey used for the total population by institution. Of the total population of 130 eligible faculty and non-faculty advisors, the data base for this study consisted of 32 responses to the advising survey questionnaire yielding a response rate of approximately 24.6%. This response rate is not an overly high return rate; however, it provides an acceptable number to suggest specific

patterns and inferences. As stated in the limitations in chapter one, greater participation in the study may have yielded different results, however, all relevant participants from both institutions were invited to participate. Those choosing to participate may have a stronger interest in advising. Those choosing not to participate may dislike the topic or have some other unknown reason that falls outside the scope of this study.

Table 1 also illustrates a response frequency of 22 for the four-year University which is 68.7% of the 32 total responses. When compared to the total population of eligible four-year advisors (90), Three Rivers University response efficiency was 24.4%.

The two-year community college contained 40 eligible faculty and non-faculty advisors of which 10 responded to the Advising Survey questionnaire for a response efficiency of 25% of the eligible advisors surveyed in the two-year institution. When compared to the total number of respondents (32), the community college accounted for 31.3% of these.

The response rates from each institution and for the total sample may appear low; however, they should reflect sufficient representation of the views of each school on the factors of interest in this study. To ensure adequate representation, additional open-ended questions were answered by a total of 24 volunteers from both the community college and the university who also participated in the survey. Fourteen respondents from Three Rivers University and all 10 respondents from Steel City Community College voluntarily answered the short open-ended questions. There was a strong pattern of non-response for one particular survey question #39 indicating the number of distance students in an advising load. The majority of respondents skipped this question all together or marked

0, indicating that the number of advisees enrolled completely in distance education or online web classes, is insignificant and therefore had little-to-no impact on this study.

Table 1

*Response Frequency & Efficiency*

Institution	Eligible Responses	Frequency	Frequency Efficiency	Response Efficiency (%)
2-yr SCCC	40	10	31.3	25.0
4-yr TRU	90	22	68.7	24.4
Total	130	32	100.0	24.6

*Analysis of the Factors that Facilitate and Inhibit a Smooth Transfer from a Community College to a Four-year University*

Faculty makes up the majority of academic advisors advising in all disciplines in the community college. There are a few fulltime staff academic advisors, however, they are divided up among the four major branch campuses and can only advise a limited number of students who attend these campuses. It is important to reiterate that the highest degree awarded to graduates from a community college is an associate degree. This study is primarily concerned with students attending a community college and who may or may not be pursuing an associate degree but have a goal of transferring to a four-year university. It is recommended, but not a requirement, that the student should meet with an academic advisor prior to registration to review his/her chosen program requirements and to make certain the classes selected apply toward the program requirements. To ensure that academic advisors have the proper information and access to certain resources so they can give accurate and effective advice to students, advisors should be prepared in advance. Barriers to effective advising could easily lead to negative outcomes thereby inhibiting a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university.

Analysis of the relationships between the perceived importance and the actual practice of advising beliefs at both the community college and four-year University highlight the perceived factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transition from one institution to the other respectively. The first part of the advising survey questionnaire addressed specific advising tasks and skills.

Table 2 *Tasks and Skills*

1 = not a role/never done  
5 = definitely a role/always done

	<u>2-yr Institution</u>						<u>4-yr Institution</u>							
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
1. Assist students in understanding how their coursework will transfer to another institution.	Should	1	0	2	1	5	9	Should	4	2	5	1	9	21
	Actually	1	1	2	1	4	9	Actually	5	5	5	3	4	22
2. Explain to students how transfer credits are evaluated.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	2	0	2	1	5	10	Actually	2	4	4	5	7	22
3. Accurately explain academic requirements to advisees.	Should	2	2	1	2	3	10	Should	3	5	5	4	4	21
	Actually	2	2	1	2	3	10	Actually	3	5	5	4	4	21
3. Accurately explain academic requirements to advisees.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	0	0	0	2	8	10	Actually	2	0	1	1	18	22
4. Assist students in selecting programs appropriate to their abilities and interest.	Should	0	0	0	2	8	10	Should	2	1	0	3	16	22
	Actually	0	0	0	2	8	10	Actually	2	1	0	3	16	22
4. Assist students in selecting programs appropriate to their abilities and interest.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	1	1	1	1	6	10	Actually	3	1	1	3	14	22
5. Assist advises with course selection to enhance career aspirations.	Should	1	1	3	2	3	10	Should	3	3	2	5	9	22
	Actually	1	1	3	2	3	10	Actually	3	3	2	5	9	22
5. Assist advises with course selection to enhance career aspirations.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	0	0	0	2	8	10	Actually	1	1	0	4	16	22
6. Explain advanced standing evaluations and transfer credits to student relative to their program choice.	Should	0	0	2	3	5	10	Should	1	1	4	6	10	22
	Actually	0	0	2	3	5	10	Actually	1	1	4	6	10	22
6. Explain advanced standing evaluations and transfer credits to student relative to their program choice.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	1	0	3	1	5	10	Actually	3	0	5	5	8	21
7. Discuss long-term goals.	Should	1	1	3	3	2	10	Should	6	3	0	6	6	21
	Actually	1	1	3	3	2	10	Actually	6	3	0	6	6	21
7. Discuss long-term goals.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	1	0	2	3	4	10	Actually	1	0	2	4	15	22
8. Inform students of career paths taken by graduates in the program.	Should	1	1	4	2	2	10	Should	1	0	8	4	9	22
	Actually	1	1	4	2	2	10	Actually	1	0	8	4	9	22
8. Inform students of career paths taken by graduates in the program.	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	Should	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	Actually	1	1	2	4	2	10	Actually	1	0	3	7	11	22
		1	2	5	1	1	10	Actually	1	2	4	7	8	22

1 = not a role/never done  
5 = definitely a role/always done

	<u>2-yr Institution</u>						<u>4-yr Institution</u>							
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
9. Register students each term.	Should	4	1	0	0	5	10	Should	3	0	3	5	11	22
	Actually	5	0	0	0	5	10	Actually	3	1	3	5	10	22
10. Know procedures for pre-registration drop/add, etc.	Should	0	0	0	0	10	10	Should	1	2	0	2	17	22
	Actually	0	0	0	0	10	10	Actually	3	1	1	5	12	22
11. Educate students on how to access registration information (i.e. Web Advisor, Schedule).	Should	1	0	1	1	7	10	Should	4	0	3	3	12	22
	Actually	1	0	3	3	3	10	Actually	3	1	4	4	9	21
12. Know what resources and services to which an advisee may be referred.	Should	0	0	0	0	10	10	Should	0	2	0	7	13	22
	Actually	0	0	0	5	5	10	Actually	2	2	3	9	6	22
13. Inspire students to accept responsibility for their academic planning.	Should	0	0	1	2	7	10	Should	0	1	3	6	12	22
	Actually	0	0	4	2	4	10	Actually	2	1	4	11	4	22
14. Explore how non-academic issues (i.e., work, activities, commuting) may influence the student's ability to manage the credit load attempted.	Should	0	0	0	1	9	10	Should	2	0	3	4	13	22
	Actually	0	0	3	3	4	10	Actually	3	2	1	5	1	22

### *Section One: Tasks and Skills*

Section one asked advisors to assess the perceived importance and the actual practice of their advising tasks and skills using two different scales. The first scale rated the extent to which the respondent felt the statement *should* be part of the advisor's role. The second scale rated the same items based on the extent to which the advisor *actually* performed that task or skill. For both scales "1" indicated the statement should not be a role or is never actually done. A "5" indicated that the statement should definitely be a role or is actually performed by the advisor with all advisees.

#### *Question 1: Assist Students in Understanding how Their Coursework will Transfer to another Institution*

Nine of the ten respondents at the community college answered question one. Six of nine or 2/3 perceived that assisting students in understanding how their coursework would transfer to another institution should be part of the advisor's role while slightly more than half of them perceived that they actually practice this belief. In contrast, the majority of the advisors at the university perceived that they should assist their advisees in understanding how their coursework would transfer to another institution yet only about one-third perceived they actually practice this. It should be noted that unlike the community college mission, transfer is not part of the university's mission. It is interesting that almost two-thirds of the university advisors perceived that this task is part of their role but they do not necessarily practice it.

#### *Question 2: Explain to Students how Transfer Credits are Evaluated*

The advisors at both institutions perceived that they should explain or be able to explain to students how transfer credits are evaluated. However not all of them actually practiced what they perceived. This practice could substantially inhibit a smooth transfer

from a community college to a four-year university. If students knew upfront how a course is evaluated for possible transfer equivalent credit, they would be able to find out in advance whether or not a class will be accepted at another institution. This information may be very valuable in saving time and money.

*Question 3: Accurately Explain Academic Requirements to Advisees*

Advisors at the community college all believed that they explain academic requirements to advisees accurately suggesting that they are confident about their knowledge of the programs they work with and are able to convey this knowledge to the students. Likewise the vast majority of the advisors at the university also believed that it is important to accurately explain the curriculum requirements to students. A small percentage of advisors did not hold this same perception. They not only believe it is not part of an advisor's role to accurately explain academic requirements to their advisees, they admittedly don't practice it.

*Question 4: Assist Students in Selecting Programs Appropriate to Their Abilities and Interests*

The majority of advisors at both institutions perceived they should assist students in selecting appropriate programs that match their interests and abilities, unfortunately not as many actually practiced what they believe. Students rely heavily on their advisors for help in progressing toward their academic and career goals. The advisor usually has the advantage of experience and knowledge of the institution's policies and procedures to help advise students in selecting suitable programs. A student would be ill-advised to enroll in a class when he or she lacks the prerequisite skills for the course.

*Question 5: Assist Advisees with Course Selection to Enhance Career Aspirations*

Most of the advisors perceived they should assist their advisees in choosing appropriate courses that will enhance career aspirations. A small group at the four-year university indicated it is not their responsibility to enhance advisee's career aspirations nor did they practice it. Advisors with this kind of thinking make it especially difficult for undecided students exploring different academic venues. This could have a negative impact on students preparing to transfer from a community college to a four-year university. It suggests some advisors are uninterested in helping students develop or achieve their educational goals.

*Question 6: Explain Advanced Standing Evaluations and Transfer Credits to Student Relative to Their Program Choice*

More than half of the advisors at both the community college and the university perceived that it is part of the advisor's role to explain advanced standing credit evaluations and transfer credits to their advisees and how these transfer credits apply toward their chosen program. Exactly 50% of the community college advisors actually practiced this task with slightly over half actually practicing this task at the university. Working against the students is more than 40% of the four-year advisors who acknowledged that explaining advanced standing credit to advisees was not part of their responsibility and therefore did not practice it or performed this task only on occasion. Students planning to transfer from a community college to a four-year university would be wise to seek out an advisor who is willing and able to assist them with transfer credits particularly relative to the student's program of choice.

*Question 7: Discuss Long-term Goals*

Between 70-86% of the advisors at the 2-year community college and the four-year university perceived the importance of discussing long-term goals with their advisees. This

high percentage dropped significantly to 40-59% of these same advisors who actually practiced their belief of discussing long-term goals with their advisees. It is interesting that close to 40% at both institutions were noncommittal, practically speaking. It appears that a small percentage at both institutions selected not a role/never done, suggesting that it is not their role or concern to discuss long-term goals with their advisees.

*Question 8: Inform Students of Career Paths Taken by Graduates in the Program*

Sixty percent of the community college advisors and over 80% of the university advisors felt that advisors should inform students of career paths taken by former graduates. The number of advisors who actually performed this task indicates a stark contrast between the university and the community college with 15 of 22 four-year advisors acknowledging actual practice and only 2 of 10 two-year advisors actually performing this task. This illustrates a rather large difference in the relationship between advisors' perceived importance and actual practice of giving information about the careers of prior graduates. It is possible that the advisors particularly at the community college do not have access to this information.

*Question 9: Register Students Each Term*

It is important to note that neither institution states clearly whose responsibility it is to register students. Advisors had differing perceptions about registering students. At the community college, half of the advisors felt strongly that registering students was definitely part of their advising role and these same advisors actually registered their advisees. In contrast, the university advisors were more divided on this issue. Sixteen of 22 believed they should register students while 15 actually registered. It appears one of the advisors felt he or

she should register students, yet did not. Those who believed it is not their role to register actually held true to their stance at both institutions.

*Question 10: Know Procedures for Pre-registration, Drop/add, Etc.*

Again, institutional policy is not clearly articulated on whose responsibility this is. Advisors at the community college unanimously believed it is definitely part of their role to not only know procedures for pre-registration, but actually performed these tasks 100% of the time. The majority of advisors at the university felt they should know pre-registration procedures and most of them actually performed them. It is somewhat disturbing to see that a handful of advisors at the university didn't perceive it as part of their job to know pre-registration procedures and a slightly larger group who acknowledged they don't. It is possible that the advisors who don't believe they should know pre-registration procedures are the same ones who don't register students. This sort of thinking may or may not have an impact on students transferring from a community college to a four-year university so long as they are willing and able to inform students about how to access this important information.

*Question 11: Educate Students on how to Access Registration Information (i.e., Web Advisor, Course Schedule)*

The results of this question coincided closely with the previous questions on registration. Most of the advisors at both institutions felt they should educate students on how to access registration information with a minority indicating it is not part of their advising role. By comparison, a majority of the advisors at both the community college and four-year University actually practiced this task, while the minority actually opposed this activity as part of their role both in theory and in practice. A substantial number chose not to commit either way suggesting perhaps a lack of training or knowledge.

*Question 12: Know What Resources and Services to Which an Advisee May be Referred*

A full 100% of the community college advisors said knowledge of available resources and services should definitely be part of an advisor's role while most of the university advisors felt it should be part of their job. Unlike the advisors at the community college who indicated actual knowledge of available resources and services for students, advisors at the university were more divided. The majority acknowledged they actually knew of the resources and services for referring advisees, while a small but significant percentage indicated this is not something they practiced and a handful were noncommittal. This disparity could have a negative influence on students transferring from a community college to a four-year university.

*Question 13: Inspire Students to Accept Responsibility for Their Academic Planning*

Advisors at the community college mostly agreed that they should inspire students to accept responsibility for developing their own academic plans; however, in reality fewer actually practiced this belief. In comparison most of the advisors at the university felt it should be part of their role to inspire students to accept responsibility for making their academic plans while not as many actually practiced this task and some advisors made no effort to inspire students to be academically responsible.

The last open-ended question is somewhat related to this survey question in that it asks advisors to share what they perceive as their most valuable advice to students. The responses give the reader a sense of the advising practices at both Steel City Community College and Three Rivers University.

*What would you say is the most valuable advice you give to all students?*

The underlying themes from the advisors at both institutions tell students that a college career is an important life decision and is more than just choosing classes. Taking

advantage of faculty as resources is important. Keeping in touch with the people who can guide and assist in making choices that affect a student's career is important. Students should take time to explore different majors. Lastly, educational goals should be examined regularly to see that choices made fit with future plans.

Some examples of SCCC advisors most valuable advice supporting these themes include the following statements. One advisor tells his advisees, "Have a long-term plan for education." Another encourages students to, "explore all possibilities." Yet another advisor tells students to "Learn about your specific program or major and don't leave your college career up to anyone totally." One advisor sums it up by saying, "Ask questions and take advantage of the services the college provides."

Advisors from Three Rivers University perceive similar advice as being most valuable to students. Here are some illustrations of their responses.

One university advisor believes, "Students should constantly review their academic progress and have a plan." Another advisor tells students, "you should take college seriously and take advantage of the resources available. Go to class, talk to your professors, and see your advisor. Take responsibility in the process." One of the advisors explains, "Advisors can make mistakes, so students need to help ensure they are moving towards their degree properly." Another respondent advises, "Be responsible for your education. Do your homework career wise. No one else can do it for you!"

One of the advisors sums it up nicely by stating "Students must take the time to consider their own interests and abilities in choosing first a major and then a career path. Sometimes this takes a little exploration and students should try a variety of coursework early on in order to assess their interests."

*Question 14: Explore how Non-academic Issues (i.e., Work, Activities, Commuting) May Influence the Student's Ability to Manage the Credit Load Attempted*

Community college advisors all felt they should explore how non-academic issues might influence their advisees' ability to manage a certain credit load while most all of the advisors at the university shared the same perception. The difference was that most of the 2-year advisors expressed true application of this task as did the 4-year advisors; however, a small percentage acknowledged they did not practice this activity with their advisees. Failing to advise students on issues that may influence their ability to successfully manage their course loads could result in a number of students performing poorly and experiencing difficulties that might have been avoided.

Table 3 *Barriers to Effective Advising*

1 = Strongly disagree  
5 = Strongly agree

	<u>2yr Institution</u>						<u>4-yr Institution</u>					
15. I am not interested in advising students.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	8	0	0	0	2	10	11	3	4	1	3	22
16. I do not have time to meet with students.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	6	2	0	1	1	10	8	5	2	2	5	21
17. It is difficult to advise non-traditional students due to time limitations.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	6	0	3	0	1	10	5	5	5	2	5	22
18. I do not have accurate information about how coursework will transfer to another institution.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	0	0	6	2	1	9	3	4	2	5	8	22
19. I do not clearly understand the procedures for academic advising.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	8	0	1	1	0	10	13	3	1	1	4	22
20. I do not know how to use advising technology.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	7	1	1	1	0	10	11	1	5	2	3	21
21. Discuss long-term goals.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	6	3	0	0	1	10	12	4	1	0	5	22
22. Inform students of career paths taken by graduates in the program.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<b>Total</b>
	6	2	1	1	0	10	12	2	0	5	3	22

1 = Strongly disagree  
5 = Strongly agree

2-yr Institution

4-yr Institution

	<u>2-yr Institution</u>					<b>Total</b>	<u>4-yr Institution</u>					<b>Total</b>
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	
23. Register students each term.	2	1	3	0	3	9	4	3	3	4	8	22
24. Know procedures for pre-registration drop/add, etc.	5	4	0	0	0	9	6	8	6	2	0	22
25. Educate students on how to access registration information (i.e. Web Advisor, Schedule).	1	1	3	1	2	8	4	1	2	4	11	21
26. Know what resources and services to which an advisee may be referred.	0	0	1	3	5	9	2	1	3	3	13	22
27. Inspire students to accept responsibility for their academic planning.	9	0	0	0	0	9	5	5	7	2	3	22
28. Explore how non-academic issues (i.e., work, activities, commuting) may influence the student's ability to manage the credit load attempted.	5	2	1	2	0	10	5	6	0	5	6	22
29. I do not know about career options for majors/programs I advise.	2	5	0	0	2	9	12	3	1	2	4	22

## *Section Two: Barriers to Effective Advising*

One of the research questions guiding this study examined the perceived administrative barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university. Questions 15 – 29 of the advising survey specifically addressed barriers to effective advising. Respondents conveyed the extent to which they agreed, disagreed or had no opinion (neither agreed nor disagreed) with each survey statement using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicated strongly disagree with the statement (not a barrier) and 5 indicated strongly agree with the survey statement (is a barrier).

A detailed description and analysis of how each survey question was answered is provided first for the community college advisors and then for the four-year university advisors. A total of ten advisors representing the community college participated in the study. These ten advisors consisted of eight fulltime faculty who advise and two fulltime staff who advise students.

### *Responses from the Two-year Institution*

#### *Question 15: I am not Interested in Advising Students*

Of the 10 respondents 8 marked strongly disagree with the statement, 2 respondents marked strongly agree with the statement. One way to interpret these numbers is that 80% of the two-year advisors are interested in advising students while 20% are not at all interested in advising students. This would indicate that the majority of advisors at the community college take an interest in advising. A small percentage of advisors, however, were not interested in advising students which may create a barrier to effective advising.

*Question 16: I do not have the Time to Meet with Students*

Six respondents marked strongly disagree, 2 respondents marked disagree, 1 respondent marked agrees and 1 respondent marked strongly agrees. The majority of responses followed the same pattern indicated in question 15. The majority of advisors who were interested in advising students also perceived that they had the time to meet with students. Whereas 20% of uninterested advisors corresponded directly with the 20% who agreed or strongly agreed that they did not have time to meet with students. Not having time to meet with students creates a barrier to effective advising.

*Question 17: It is Difficult to Advise Non-traditional Students Due to Time Limitations*

Six of ten respondents indicated it is not difficult to advise non-traditional students due to time limitations. Three respondents marked no opinion, 1 respondent marked strongly agree, suggesting a degree of difficulty advising non-traditional students due to time limitations.

*Question 18: I do not have Accurate Information about how Coursework will Transfer to another Institution*

Six out of nine respondents marked neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Two marked agree, 1 respondent marked strongly agree with the statement. These responses suggested that the advisors more than likely did not advise many students on how coursework transfers to another institution. The few advisors that did advise or were asked how coursework will transfer to another institution felt they did not have accurate information to give to students. Another interpretation for the number of respondents choosing neither agree nor disagree might be that they have sufficient information about how coursework transfers to some colleges and universities but not to others. Some may have responded neither agree nor disagree because it depends on the university or program.

*Question 19: I do not Clearly Understand the Procedures for Academic Advising*

Of the 10 respondents, 8 chose strongly disagree, indicating that 80% understand clearly the procedures for academic advising while 1 respondent marked neither agrees nor disagrees, and 1 respondent marked agrees with the statement. These 2 responses suggest a very small percentage of advisors at the community college either do not understand clearly the procedures for academic advising or are indifferent and have no opinion one way or the other about understanding clearly or not the procedures for academic advising. Choosing neither agrees nor disagrees may also indicate that understanding varies from procedure to procedure.

*Question 20: I do not Know how to Use Advising Technology*

Of the 10 respondents, 7 marked strongly disagree with the statement, 1 respondent marked disagree, 1 marked neither agree nor disagree with the statement, 1 respondent marked agrees with the statement. Eighty percent indicated that they do know how to use advising technology while 10% are indifferent and 10% suggest they either do not know how to use advising technology or they are not sure how to use advising technology if it was available.

The third open-ended question addresses how technology plays a role in advising. Below are summaries of the responses from the community college advisors.

The general consensus of the advisors at Steel City Community College is that technology is very important, helpful and necessary. It provides access to data and information to help facilitate the advising process. Technology plays a crucial role in advising. It provides information quickly such as grades, transcripts, class schedules, course information, enrollment caps, and enables online schedule changes. Most of the advisors

could not advise nearly as well without the use of technology. One advisor captures the overall perception by stating, “Advisors must have knowledge and hands-on technology experience.” This response suggests technology is very important. As one advisors admitted, “It provides access to data/information to help facilitate the advising process.” The only drawback mentioned is a need for training in order to understand how to access this vital student and course information.

*Question 21: I am not Comfortable Facilitating Career Planning and Goal Setting*

Of the 10 respondents, 6 chose strongly disagree, 3 chose disagree, and 1 respondent chose strongly agrees to the statement. These answers suggested that 90% of the advisors felt comfortable facilitating career planning and goal setting while 10% were very uncomfortable facilitating career planning and goal setting. This is an indication that certain advisors would not be very effective helping students develop their career and academic goals thus creating a barrier to effective advising.

*Question 22: I do not Know the Specific Academic Requirements of Programs*

Of the 10 respondents, 6 selected strongly disagree with this statement, 2 marked disagree, 1 marked neither agree nor disagree, and 1 marked agrees with the statement. No one indicated they strongly agreed with the statement which suggests that 80% feel they do not know the specific academic requirements of programs offered at their institution. Ten percent indicated they do not know the specifics suggesting they may know the general requirements, while another ten percent admittedly do not know the specific requirement of programs.

*Question 23: Registration is not the same as Advising and should be done by Professional Staff*

Nine respondents answered this question as follows: 2 strongly disagree with the statement, 1 disagrees, 3 neither agree nor disagree, and 3 strongly agree with the statement. These answers imply that among the 2-year community college advisors roughly one-third felt registration is the same as advising and should be done by professional staff; one-third had no opinion, and one-third felt strongly that registration is not the same as advising and should be handled by professional staff, or that registration is not the same as advising but still should not be done by professional staff. In other words, faculty should advise students, not staff. Some advisors believed advising requires more than picking out classes and signing off on a registration form.

*Question 24: Our Institution does not have Clear Transfer Articulation Agreements*

Nine participants responded to this question as follows: 5 chose strongly disagree with the statement while 4 respondents chose disagree with the statement. The community college advisors obviously felt that their institution has clearly articulated transfer agreements. This is not to suggest however that the advisors know the contents of the transfer agreements, only that their institution has them.

*Question 25: We have Transfer Agreements but I have had no Training in Understanding Them*

Only 8 survey participants responded to this statement. One respondent strongly disagrees, one disagrees, 3 neither agree nor disagree with the statement, one agrees and two strongly agree with the statement. Responses were quite diverse for this question.

Percentage-wise, nearly 40% voiced no opinion, however nearly 40% indicated they are aware of existing transfer agreements but have not received training in understanding the

agreements, while 2 out of 8 respondents or 25%, indicated they received some type of training in understanding the transfer agreements.

The second open-ended question addresses clear policies on how credits transfer. Below is a summary of the responses from the advisors at the community college.

*Does your Institution have a Clear Policy as to how Credits Transfer from other Institutions to Your Own? Are you Familiar with the Policy?*

Most of the respondents at Steel City Community College believed their institution has a clear policy on transfer credits and also conducts transfer credit evaluations on a case-by-case basis based upon an institution's accreditation, the grade(s) earned and the course description. Most of the advisors are familiar with the transfer policy however they noted that community college has a designated transfer counselor who works with the transfer policy but the Director of Registration is responsible for determining the actual transfer of courses. For example, one advisor noted, "Advisors have some documents that can aid the students but only the Director of Registration provides the official advanced standing evaluation." Another advisor stated, "I'm not familiar. This is the general information given to students by advisors. We send them to the transfer counselor."

The faculty advisors at Steel City Community College indicated the institution has clearly stated policies on transfer credit, however, when there are questions on transfer issues, SCCC has an in-house transfer specialist to handle specific transfer issues.

*Question 26: Transfer and/or Articulation Agreements should be Managed by Professional Staff*

Nine respondents answered this question as follows: 1 neither disagrees nor agrees, 3 agreed with the statement and 5 strongly agreed with the this statement prompting the idea advisors perceive that transfer and articulation agreements should indeed be managed by professional staff and not by faculty whether staff advise or not.

*Question 27: My School does not have Trained Personnel to Assist Transfer Students*

Of the nine participants who responded to this question, all nine unanimously chose strongly disagreed, signifying that the community college advisors unanimously believed their institution has trained personnel to assist transfer students. However, the advisors themselves may or may not be part of the trained personnel.

*Question 28: The Lack of Rewards for Quality Advising Makes it a Lower Priority*

All ten participants responded to this question. Five marked strongly disagree, two marked disagree, one neither disagrees nor agrees with the statement and two respondents agree with the statement. No one strongly agrees with the statement. These responses implied that 70% of the advisors felt rewards were not required or necessary to promote quality advising nor did the lack of rewards make advising a lower or lesser priority. It is interesting; however, that two of the ten or 20% of those responding suggested that increased rewards for quality advising would make it a higher priority. It is important to reiterate that faculty at community college receive compensation for advising equivalent to teaching 3 credit hours. The responses to this question, therefore, are likely to be influenced by this fact.

The fifth open-ended question asks advisors for suggestions for faculty “buy in” for advising students when it is not clearly stated as part of their job duties. Below are the responses from the advisors at the community college.

*What Suggestions would you make to Help get Faculty “Buy In” on Advising Students when it is not Addressed in Their Job Description?*

The consensus at Steel City Community College was a “buy in” wasn’t necessary. Getting faculty to advise isn’t a problem. Faculty has to want to advise, however financial incentives work well. In the past faculty were obligated to advise without compensation.

Faculty now receives the equivalent of teaching 3 credits for general advising. Convincing faculty that advising students is for the betterment of the institution was suggested along with emphasizing how advising students potentially aids enrollment and job security.

One individual felt all new faculty should have to spend time as an advisor saying, “I personally think all new faculty should have to spend time as an advisor. There is not a better way to learn about the programs and policies of the school.” This is contrary to another advisor who felt, “Only faculty who want to advise (and are generally the same faculty year after year) will do a good job. We want to be there and are familiar with all programs.”

*Question 29: I do not Know about Career Options for Majors/Programs I Advise*

Two respondents strongly agreed to this statement, five agreed and two strongly disagreed for a total of nine responses to this question. This translates to approximately 78% of the advisors believed that they do know about career options for the programs they advise while 22% admittedly do not know about career options for the programs for which they advise. These advisors would not be effective for students wanting to know about career options in those particular areas of study.

*Responses from the Four-Year Institution*

A total of 22 advisors representing the four-year liberal arts university participated in the study. These 22 advisors consisted of 13 fulltime faculty who advise students and nine fulltime staff who advise students. The advisors at the four year university answered the same questions 15 – 29—barriers to effective advising—in the following manner.

*Question 15: I am not Interested in Advising Students*

Eleven marked strongly disagree, 3 disagree, 4 neither agree nor disagree with the statement, 1 respondent agrees and 3 strongly agree with the statement. Excluding the 4 respondents who have no opinion, 14 of 22 or 64% perceived they were interested in advising students, while 4 of 22 or 18% perceive they were not interested in advising students. Lack of interest in advising students certainly insinuates a barrier to effective advising.

*Question 16: I do not have the Time to Meet with Students*

Of the 22 responses, 8 strongly disagree, 5 disagree, 2 respondents neither agree nor disagree, 2 agree with the statement and 5 respondents strongly agree. Translated into percentages, 59% (13 of 22) of the advisors at the university perceived an interest in advising students, 9% or 2 of 22, showed no opinion one way or the other. That leaves 32% (7 of 22) of the advisors indicating they have little-to-no time for advising students, hinting strongly that barriers to effective advising exist.

*Question 17: It is Difficult to Advise Non-Traditional Students Due to Time Limitations*

Respondents were evenly split with their answers to this question. Five marked strongly disagree, 5 marked disagree, 5 marked neither agree nor disagree, 2 marked agree and 5 marked strongly agree with the statement. When grouped, 10 of 22 or 45%, of the advisors at the university indicated they had no difficulty advising non-traditional students due to time limitations. Twenty-three percent indicated they have no opinion. Thirty-two percent of the academic advisors at the university indicated that they experienced difficulty advising non-traditional students due to time limitations. This could mean that 32% of the

advisors required more time to advise non-traditional students than they were able to give or that advising non-traditional students may be more complicated, needing extra time.

*Question 18: I do not have Accurate Information about how Coursework will Transfer to another Institution*

Three respondents chose strongly disagree, 4 chose disagree, 2 chose neither agree nor disagree, 5 respondents marked agree and 8 marked strongly agree with the statement. Less than 20% of the responding advisors (4 of 22) believed they have accurate information and could assist transfer students. The majority (13 of 22) of the advisors at the university believed they do not have accurate information about how coursework will transfer, giving the impression that they were not well equipped or prepared to give effective advice to students who have transferred or who are considering transferring. This presents a serious barrier to effective advising, particularly transfer advising.

*Question 19: I do not Clearly Understand the Procedures for Academic Advising*

Thirteen of 22 advisors marked strongly disagree with this statement, 3 marked disagree, 1 marked no opinion, 1 marked agrees, and 4 respondents marked strongly agree. Nearly 75% (13+3) of the advisors at the university acknowledged that they understand clearly the procedures for academic advising. Slightly over 4% did not admit one way or the other, and 9% openly admitted they do not understand clearly the procedures for academic advising. This is not to say these advisors were unable to advise, it suggests though that their lack of understanding the procedures for advising creates a barrier to effective advising and they might well benefit from some training and/or assistance. It also suggests a lack of cohesive advisor training at the institution.

*Question 20: I do not Know how to Use Advising Technology*

Eleven respondents marked strongly disagree, 1 marked disagree, 5 marked no opinion, 2 marked agree and 3 marked strongly agree with the statement. Over half (12 of 22) of the advisors indicated that they know how to use advising technology with 23% not willing to commit either way, and another 23% acknowledged that they do not know how to use advising technology. Not knowing how to use advising technology is a strong indication of a barrier to effective advising.

The third open-ended question addresses how technology plays a role in advising. Below are summaries of the responses from the university advisors.

*How does Technology Play a Role in the Way you Advise Students?*

Technology plays an important role in advising at Three Rivers University in many ways including the retrieval of records. Some of the advisors use electronic mail to help develop relationships with their advisees. The university recently conducted a pilot program that seemed somewhat useful. Advisors are hopeful the program will play more of a role with advisement. There were some unfortunate incidents such as data deficiencies and access problems that rendered the pilot program ineffective. The overall consensus though was that technology is a critical factor in advisement particularly for staff who advise. Staff regularly uses the computer management system to review academic records, transcripts, program information, etc. Degree audit systems and on-line registration have become vital for both students and advisors as students are expected to become more responsible for knowing academic requirements. According to one advisor, a major drawback in using technology to help advise students would be, "If the network goes down, advising would not be possible."

The responses to the open-ended question regarding the role of technology in advising students gives strong indication that the advisors, when answering the survey question, did not feel they were trained proficiently in using advising technology. They do realize, however, as suggested by their responses to the open-ended question, that technology indeed plays an essential role in advising students.

*Question 21: I am not Comfortable Facilitating Career Planning and Goal Setting*

Twelve of 22 respondents chose strongly disagree, 4 chose disagree with this statement, 1 marked neither agree nor disagree, none marked agree and 5 respondents marked strongly agrees with the statement. Practically  $\frac{3}{4}$  (16 of 22) of the advisors at the university were comfortable facilitating career planning and goal setting. Less than 5% gave no opinion and slightly more than 22% of the participating advisors (5 of 22) were not comfortable facilitating career planning and goal setting, a common expectation of academic advisors. Close to a quarter of the responding advisors indicated they were not comfortable facilitating career planning and goal setting. This suggests a barrier to effective advising with regard to career planning goal setting exists among the advisors at the four-year institution.

*Question 22: I do not Know the Specific Academic Requirements of Programs*

Twelve respondents selected strongly disagree, 2 selected disagree with the statement. Five respondents agree with the statement and 3 strongly agree with it. This translates into 64% of the advisors at the university believed they know the specific academic requirements of the programs (they advise). The barrier to effective advising occurs with the 36% who admittedly do not know the specific academic requirements of programs. They may know the general requirements that apply to most or all programs and consequently can only

provide general advice to students thus reducing their effectiveness of advising students on specific program requirements.

*Question 23: Registration is not the same as Advising and should be done by Professional Staff*

This particular statement can be interpreted different ways. Four respondents marked strongly disagree, 3 marked disagree, 3 marked neither agree nor disagree, 4 marked agree with the statement, and 8 of 22 respondents marked strongly agree with this statement. More than half of the advisors (12 of 22) at the university believed that registration is not the same as advising and should be done by professional staff. Fourteen percent had no opinion and close to a third believed that registration is the same as advising and should be done by professional staff or that registration is not the same as advising but still should not be done by professional staff. In other words, faculty should advise students, not staff.

*Question 24: Our Institution does not have clear Transfer Articulation Agreements*

Six respondents marked strongly disagree, 8 marked disagree, another 6 marked neither agree nor disagree, and 2 respondents marked agree with the statement. None marked strongly agree with the statement. Close to 2/3 of the advisors perceived their institution has clear transfer articulation agreements. Twenty-seven percent have no opinion. Nine percent believed their institution does not have clear transfer articulation agreements. Perhaps they were not familiar enough with them to give effective advice.

*Question 25: We have transfer agreements but I have had no training in understanding them*

Four respondents chose strongly disagree, 1 chose disagree, 2 chose neither agree nor disagree, 4 chose agree with the statement and 11 chose strongly agree with this statement. With only 23% acknowledging they had training or at least some training in understanding the institution's transfer agreements, a full 68% of the advisors admitted to having no

training in understanding the transfer agreements. This presents a severe barrier to effectively advising students on the subject of transfer agreements and how certain courses and/or credits transfer into the university's programs.

The second open-ended question addresses clear policies on how credits transfer. Below is a summary of the responses from the advisors at Three Rivers University.

In general, advisors at Three Rivers University have some knowledge and familiarity with the institution's transfer policies but are not comfortable dealing with specifics. One respondent summarized clearly what most of the advisors perceive:

“We have articulation agreements with specific institutions however I do not know which ones nor do I have access to this information or know which individuals do. The institution has a useful web site that indicates how certain courses will transfer from specific schools. When it comes to schools not included, determining transfer credit becomes guesswork at best. The final evaluation rests with central admissions. Specific courses in question have to be handled on a case-by-case basis.”

A few advisors felt the whole process is time consuming and somewhat tedious. A policy exists but it's not clear nor is it updated regularly. According to one response, “Once you get into the departments and academic units, the policies get somewhat confused and are not always enforced appropriately.” One advisor referred transfer questions to the Registrar. This same advisor said, “I am never sure of the full set of rules and more importantly wouldn't want to present outdated information to students.”

Overall, the advisors at Three Rivers University agree there are transfer policies, however, they are not well trained on these policies nor does Three Rivers University have a

transfer specialist to address specific transfer issues, making it difficult to adhere to the policies with any degree of consistency.

*Question 26: Transfer and/or Articulation Agreements should be Managed by Professional Staff*

Two respondents marked strongly disagree, 1 marked disagree, 3 marked neither agree nor disagree, 3 respondents marked agree with the statement and 13 of 22 respondents marked strongly agree with this statement. With 16 of 22 representing 73%, the general consensus at the university was that transfer and articulation agreements should indeed be managed by professional staff, suggesting faculty not be involved in the management process only.

*Question 27: My School does not have Trained Personnel to Assist Transfer Students*

Five of the survey respondents marked strongly disagree, 5 marked disagree, 7 marked neither agree nor disagree, 2 marked agree with the statement and 3 marked strongly agree. Ten out of 22 or 45% perceived that the university does have trained personnel to assist transfer students. Thirty-two percent expressed no opinion in this matter, leaving just under 25% perceiving the university does not have trained personnel to assist transfer students. Or if there were trained personnel, a percentage of advisors were unaware of them creating a barrier to providing effective advising.

*Question 28: The Lack of Rewards for Quality Advising makes it a Lower Priority*

Respondents to this question were equally split with their opinions with no one choosing the middle road. Five marked strongly disagree, 6 marked disagree with the statement. Five respondents marked agree with the statement and 6 marked strongly agree. Fifty percent believed a lack of rewards for quality advising made it a lower priority and 50% believed it does not. This could imply that rewarding quality advising would not only

promote advising itself, making it a higher priority, it would motivate advisors to improve and possibly increase their advising time. Nonetheless, there appears to be a division among advisors over rewarding quality advising thus creating another barrier to effective advising.

The fifth open-ended question asks advisors for suggestions for faculty “buy in” for advising students when it is not clearly stated as part of their job duties. Following is a synoptic view of the responses from the advisors at the university.

*What Suggestions would you make to help get Faculty “Buy In” on Advising Students when it is not Addressed in Their Job Description?*

Responses to the above question clearly illustrate advisors at the university feel strongly that advising would be taken more seriously and given more priority if it were tied to the tenure/promotion process. This perception could be influenced by the fact that all faculty advisors at TRU are required to advise students. A few responses suggested that advising be voluntary and that not everyone is suited to advise. By making advising an integral part of the promotion/tenure process, faculty would have a built-in incentive to make advising a priority.

Some of the responses that support this thinking stipulate advising should be part of faculty’s responsibility. One respondent replied, “Advising should be added to faculty job descriptions because it will not be considered a priority unless it is included in tenure/promotion decisions.”

One of the advisors responded, “Advising should be used as a tool for promotion.” Another felt strongly that, “Advising should be handled in a way to link it to the tenure/promotion process. Merit pay would help too or a bonus system.” One more respondent concluded, “Faculty ‘buy in’ will not occur in any major way until advising is an integral part of the promotion/tenure process.”

*Question 29: I do not Know about Career Options for Majors/Programs I Advise*

Twelve respondents marked strongly disagree, 3 marked disagree, 1 marked neither agree nor disagree, 2 marked agree and 4 marked strongly agree with the statement. In terms of percentages, 68% of the advisors at the university perceived they know about career options for majors and programs they advise. A small percentage (less than 5%) had no opinion; however, a little over 25% perceived they have no knowledge about career options for the majors and programs they advise. This could easily pose a barrier to effectively advising students, particularly when students are seeking information about potential careers in certain majors.

Table 4

*Faculty Tenure Status and Advising Experience*

	2-yr Institution		4-yr Institution	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Tenure status (n=29)				
Tenured	6	60.0	8	42.1
Not tenured	4	40.0	11	57.9
Years of Advising Experience				
5 or less years	4	40.0	11	50.0
6 to 10 years	3	30.0	2	9.0
11 to 15 years	2	20.0	2	9.0
16 to 20 years	0	0.0	3	14.0
20 or more years	1	10.0	4	18.0

Just over half of the respondents at the community college reported being tenured (n=6, 60%), while over half of the respondents at the four year university reported being not tenured (n=11, 57.9%). As far as length of time advising, 7 of the 10 (70%) respondents at the community college have 10 or fewer years of advising service. Thirteen of 22 or 59% of the respondents at the university have 10 or fewer years of advising service, leaving over one-third of them with more than 11 years of advising experience.

The majority of respondents advise in one to three programs or majors at the university, while the number of programs varies per advisor at the community college. The reason for the program variation is that students are not assigned to advisors at the community college. Advisors are compensated to advise for a specified number of hours each semester. The students seeking advice could be in any number of majors or programs. Unlike the community college, advisors at the university are assigned to students based on the students' chosen major. Advising is considered part of the job expectations.

Table 5

*Advising Time and Load*

Characteristics	2-yr Institution		4-yr Institution	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Percent of Time Spent Advising				
10 or less	5	50.0	11	50.0
11 to 20	3	30.0	6	27.3
More than 20	2	20.0	5	22.7
Undergraduate Advising Load				
Varies	10	100.0	6	27.3
25 or fewer	0		6	27.3
26 to 60	0		5	22.7
60 or more	0		5	22.7

The percent of time spent advising students at the community college closely parallels the time spent advising students at the university with half spending 10% or less of their time advising, 11 to 20% spent roughly 30% of their time advising students and around 20% spent more than one-fifth of their time advising students. These numbers coincide with the mix of fulltime staff advisors and fulltime faculty advisors who also teach, research, and publish as part of their expected responsibilities.

The advising load differs markedly between the community college and the university. All of the respondents at the community college indicated the number of advisees they have varies, corresponding to the fact that students are not assigned to advisors at the 2-year institution. In contrast to the community college advising load, the advising load is

fairly evenly divided at the university where advisors are assigned to students based upon chosen majors, suggesting that the larger departments have more advisees per advisor or that they have more faculty to advise students.

The fourth open-ended question addresses a recommended advisee load. Below are summaries of the responses first from Steel City Community followed by Three Rivers University.

*What would you Recommend as a Reasonable Number of Students Assigned for You to Advise?*

According to the responses, there was no set number of advisees. The advisors at Steel City Community College pointed out that students are not assigned to advisors. Rather, faculty are encouraged to advise students in all disciplines and are compensated by working ninety hours per semester seeing as many students as needed. The typical appointment is 30 minutes per student but can vary per student need and time of year. Students at SCCC are encouraged to make appointments but advisors also take walk-ins.

Advisors at Three Rivers University felt anywhere from as few as 10 students to as many as 100 or more were a reasonable number of advisees. Fulltime faculty thought 10 to 30 students was good but that depended on the type of student. One advisor felt two-year students usually needed more hand-holding stating, "Transfer students require a lot of time up-front and often have scheduling issues due to missing prerequisite classes." More than 20 students posed a concern for one advisor who felt he was, "seeing too many students simply for course registration". This same advisor felt, "the chance to interact with them so that I understand their long-term interests" may be lost with a large advising load. In closing, one respondent looked at both faculty and staff advisors saying, "For a faculty member, 30 might

be reasonable. For a professional staff member, 100 or more might be appropriate, depending upon other duties.”

Table 6 illustrates how advisors perceived they are presently assessed in their institution. Twenty percent of the respondents at the community college believed that advising isn't assessed at all; while nearly 60% of the respondents at the university believed advising is not assessed. Ten percent of the 2-year advisors felt advising is evaluated by student satisfaction, yet a full third of the university advisors noted that student satisfaction is used as a means of assessment. Ten percent or fewer of the respondents at both institutions felt that either administrator feedback or peer review are methods currently used for assessing advising. Sixty percent of the respondents at the community college believed a combination of methods is used to assess how they advise students while fewer than 5% of the respondents at the university felt this way.

All survey participants believed advising should be assessed in some way. The most preferred method is a combination of methods. Ninety percent of the respondents at the community college and 76.4% of the respondents at the university chose a combination of methods as the preferred way to evaluate advising. In general, advisors overwhelmingly preferred to be assessed using multiple methods. Additionally, the majority of advisors at the university (63.6%) felt advising should be considered in the promotion and tenure process while advisors at the community college were split with 40% agreeing that advising should be included in the promotion and tenure process and 40% against the idea.

Table 6

*Assessment and Evaluation of Advising*

Characteristics	2-yr Institution		4-yr Institution	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Current method of assessing advising				
It isn't	2	20.0	12	57.1
Student satisfaction	1	10.0	7	33.3
Administrator feedback	1	10.0	0	0.0
Peer review	0	0.0	1	4.8
Combination of methods	6	60.0	1	4.8
Preferred method of assessing advising				
It shouldn't	0	0.0	0	0.0
Student satisfaction	1	10.0	2	11.8
Administrator feedback	0	0.0	1	5.9
Peer review	0	0.0	1	5.9
Combination of methods	9	90.0	13	76.4
Advising should be considered in the promotion and tenure process				
Disagree/strongly disagree	4	40.0	4	18.2
Neutral	2	20.0	4	18.2
Agree/strongly agree	4	40.0	14	63.6

The first open-ended question asks advisors if they view advising as an extension to teaching or as a service performed because it affects merit promotion or tenure.

*As a faculty/staff member, do you see academic advising as an extension of your classroom teaching, or as a service activity that you do because it counts towards merit promotion or tenure?*

Responses from the community college described academic advising as: part of being a faculty member, an extension of professional duties, an extension of classroom teaching, a service activity but not a criteria for tenure or promotion, a separate activity altogether. One advisor stated emphatically, “I believe advising is one aspect of serving students’ needs. I would like to think professors do it as a service not necessarily predicated on using it towards tenure or promotion.” One advisor admitted I “do it because of the three credit payment”, emphasizing that, “Those of us who elect to advise usually do it year after year and are very familiar with the process and therefore can be very helpful to students.”

The overarching perception at Three Rivers University is that advising is essential and should be done by trained faculty or department staff. One advisor sees advising as, “a valuable service to paying customers who deserve to have the best resources and sources of information available to them to help them achieve their academic and career goals.” One individual admits, “I do it because it is required.” Another advisor at Three Rivers University perceives “advising is an extension of teaching; at least it is for those individuals who advise in their disciplines.”

One respondent believes advising is an integral part of regular job functions in an enrollment management model stating,

“Specialized groups of students (i.e. undecided students, first generation students, athletes, freshmen) are better assisted by professional staff until later when faculty

connections can be developed. The best possible arrangement for students would be a joint faculty/staff model where students have both a faculty advisor and access to professional advisors and counselors for additional assistance.”

Table 7 represents the different methods used to learn advising. The most common method used at the university was self-teaching (59.0%). “Other” accounts for 31%, rounded out with 9.0% of the training taught through formal workshops. At the community college the top ranking training method is being mentored by someone followed by other unspecified methods.

The majority of respondents at both institutions reported feeling satisfied or neutral with the current advising process (90% community college and 59.1% of university respondents). Ten percent reported being dissatisfied with the advising process at the community college while 40.9% felt dissatisfied at the university. This might suggest that advisors at Steel City Community College receive more training in advising students, feel prepared and confident about their ability to advise the students at community college in a variety of programs. The advisors at the university, however, indicate they do not feel well prepared and would benefit from training through means other than self-teaching.

Table 7

*Training for and Satisfaction with Advising Process*

Characteristics	2-yr Institution		4-yr Institution	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Method of training for advising				
Self –taught	1	10.0	13	59.0
Mentored by someone else	4	40.0	0	0.0
Formal workshops	1	10.0	2	9.0
Department meetings	1	10.0	0	0.0
Other	3	30.0	7	31.0
Satisfaction with Advising Process				
Dissatisfied/extremely dissatisfied	1	10.0	9	40.9
Neutral	3	30.0	11	50.0
Satisfied/extremely satisfied	6	60.0	2	9.1

The sixth open-ended question relates to the table above asking advisors at both institutions if they feel equipped to provide effective advising to transfer students. The answers are mixed.

*Do you feel you are equipped with the appropriate tools necessary to provide effective advising to transfer students?*

Some advisors at the community college said yes and some said no. Most of the advisors felt they could answer general questions about transfer credits. One responded, “You need the time to look up the information or refer to a transfer specialist.” Another stated, “Most advisors have limited knowledge of transfer programs and courses.” Steel City

Community College employs a fulltime transfer counselor and the advisors mostly defer to this individual. They refer students with specific questions to the transfer specialist.

Advisors at Three Rivers University had mixed responses. Some said yes, while others said no. One advisor responded, "I had to figure out a lot of this on my own." One advisor felt equipped to advise students transferring in but had no idea what to tell students who were transferring out unless they were going into a specific program. One advisor said, "I would like more training on the issue because I know the basics but I am not confident on all the policies." Another advisor felt somewhat equipped but admits, "I always have to ask questions." One of the advisors stated, "We need written guidelines." Another advisor concluded she feels equipped to advise explaining, "I happen to be a licensed professional counselor with background and training in career counseling. Twenty years of experience at one institution has also afforded me the experience with the curriculum that helps. Most faculty and staff do not have this prior to advising students."

#### *Summary of the Findings*

This chapter presented the findings of the study. The study focused primarily on three elements. The study examined the relationship between advisor perception of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of advising. Next the study looked closely at the similarities and differences in perceptions between advisors in a community college and advisors in a four-year private liberal arts university based upon their perceptions of advising tasks and skills, barriers to effective advising and professional characteristics. Lastly, the study identified advisors' perceived barriers inhibiting a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university.

For the most part, advisors perceptions of what their role should be at the community college paralleled the advisors perceptions at the four-year university. The overwhelming consensus clearly demonstrated through their responses was that advising is an important and necessary function that inevitably influences students' decisions. The differences were more obvious in their perception of actual implementation or practice of certain advising policies and procedures, particularly with regard to transfer issues. Advisors at the community college generally appear to have a better understanding of their institution's policies and procedures for dealing with transfer functions than the advisors at the four-year university.

The perceived barriers to effective advising in general and advising transfer students appear to fall into these critical areas: available resources, level of interest, training, access to accurate information, motivation and time constraints. Furthermore, not everyone is suited for advising. Advising may be more effective when practiced by those who truly want to advise rather than making it a required part of the job especially with respect to faculty.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter five begins with a summary of the entire study. Discussion of the findings and conclusions are presented to support recommendations and further research.

#### *Summary*

As the number of students transferring from a 2-year or community college to a four-year college or university continues to rise, institutions of higher education must also develop new and more effective methods of dealing with these transfer students. One way to incorporate a smooth transfer function is through effective advising. Advising is a significant issue in higher education and particularly to students transferring from community colleges into four-year colleges and universities. Advising can be viewed as a dyadic relationship between the student and the advisor. The attitude or perception of advisors—both faculty and non-faculty—as it relates to advising transfer students is an important factor in identifying the characteristics of a smooth transition between a community college and a four-year college or university.

#### *Purpose*

The study had three distinct purposes. First, the study sought to determine the relationship between advisor perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of academic advising. The second purpose was to explore how advisor perceptions differ between advisors in a community college and advisors in a four-year university based upon perceptions of advising tasks and skills, barriers to effective advising and professional characteristics. The final purpose was to identify advisors' perceived barriers to a smooth transition moving from a community college to a four-year university.

The population under study consisted of 130 faculty and non-faculty members from both a two-year and four-year institution of higher education. Ninety members were from the private four-year university and forty were from the community college. Of the 130 eligible faculty and non-faculty advisors, the data base for this study consisted of 32 responses to the advising survey yielding a response rate of approximately 24.6%. The four-year University represented 68.7% of the total respondents and the community college accounted for 31.3%. Although the number of responses appears small, the data collected indicates an adequate representation of the advisors' perceptions from both institutions. All relevant respondents were invited from both the community college and the four-year university to participate in the study. A potential limitation, however, may be that those choosing to participate have a higher level of interest in advising than those choosing not to participate.

### *Research Questions*

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the relationship between the advisors' perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their actual practice of academic advising?
2. What are the perceived administrative barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university?
3. What are the perceived similarities and differences among the two-year advisors in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?

4. What are the perceived similarities and differences among the four-year university advisors in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?
5. Is there a difference between what community college and four-year university advisors perceive as the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university?

### *Literature Review*

The history of academic advising is closely linked to the history of higher education and the evolution of the community college and can be subdivided into several eras.

Throughout these eras, the basic goal of enhancing learning has been related to the nature of students' involvement with their teachers. Prescriptive and developmental advising models describe the poles on a continuum measuring the nature of control in the student-advisor relationship and the tasks associated with advising (Crookston, 1972; Erdman, 2004; Grites & Gordon, 2000; O'Banion, 1972). Most institutions use a combination of advising models, varying the approach for specific student populations or colleges within the university (Habley, 2000; Kramer, 1995). The most frequently cited benefit of quality academic advising is student retention (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Institutions benefit from increased retention and efficient degree completion by students, in terms of both internal financial support and efforts for external support, such as fundraising and alumni support (Farren, 1995).

Despite the amount of information known about the positive effects of developmental advising, little change has occurred in the practice of advising students (Erdman, 2004; Frost, 2000; O'Banion, 1994). Colleges and universities continue to use a variety of advising

techniques with prescriptive advising as the most prevalent. Crockett (1988) noted that advisor training and development is even less prevalent than faculty advisor evaluations. While faculty at nearly all institutions of higher education has some advising responsibilities, their satisfaction and expectation levels vary considerably (Habley & Morales, 1998). Creamer and Scott (2000) proposed that the role of advisor should be defined by availability, knowledge and helpfulness.

Advising students transferring from one institution to another, more specifically from a community college to a four-year university as illustrated in this study, requires a closer, more in-depth examination of the student's educational and career goals. Transfer students should be given the most appropriate, pragmatic, accurate advice from the point of acceptance to complete the proper sequence of classes with the assurance of knowing in advance whether each course will transfer or not. Transfer students face the risk of losing credits, repeating courses, paying additional tuition, and possibly delaying graduation (Bender, 1990), all of which create a snowball effect of barriers that can at least be minimized if not avoided with effective academic advising. Community colleges have an obligation to ensure that students receive appropriate and accurate instruction, information and advice (Eaton, 1988).

### *Methodology*

This descriptive study utilized a combination of quantitative survey and qualitative open-ended questions designed to assess advisor/counselor perceptions of their role in advising students transferring from a community college to a four-year university. The study built upon previous research on academic advising with updated survey items added to reflect current transfer advising practices. All undergraduate academic advisors, counselors,

and administrators who work directly with transfer students were included in the study. The five initial research questions provided a fundamental guidance for collecting data, forming categories, identifying barriers and characteristics, ultimately shaping the outcomes that emerged from the final stages of the data analysis and described in the results and findings.

### *Findings*

The findings of this study identified six primary categories of perceived administrative barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university: 1) role of an advisor, 2) level of interest, 3) training, 4) access to accurate information, 5) motivation or rewards, and 6) time constraints. An additional area of suitability could be added to the list but with less emphasis as this study did not specifically address advisor suitability. However, both faculty and non-faculty advisors made references in their comments to the idea that not everyone is suited to advise students for a variety of reasons such as the individual's negative level of interest or attitude toward advising, perceived unimportance of advising, time commitment, and the amount of support provided by the institution.

The perceived similarities and differences among the two-year advisors in identifying the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university center on the advisors' overall perception of the advisor role, what they perceive advisors should do compared to what they actually practice, and several issues that may limit their ability to advise effectively including interest, training, motivation, information and time.

The majority of advisors at the Steel City Community College are fulltime faculty members with some non-faculty advisors. Faculty are not required to advise students nor are

the advisors assigned to advisees. Rather they are compensated with the equivalent of 3 credit hours in return for spending a total of 90 hours per semester in the advising center advising students in all disciplines.

The study shows that this system of advising has positive outcomes. Ninety percent of the advisors reported feeling satisfied or neutral with the current advising process at the community college. Typically only fulltime faculty who are genuinely interested in assisting students academically advise at SCCC. They take a serious approach to advising. Training appears to be either self-taught or mentored by another advisor. The majority of advisors feel prepared to be effective advisors or have access to resources to address more specific student issues.

The community college employs fulltime transfer counselors who work exclusively with transfer and articulation agreements between the community college and surrounding four-year colleges and universities. Advisors unable to provide information on specific transfer-related issues, refer the advisee to a transfer advisor. Nearly all of the advisors at SCCC believe advising should be assessed using a combination of evaluative methods, implying a certain sense of value inherent in service-oriented activities like advising.

The most notable discrepancy among the two-year advisors was their perception of registration. There was no prominent perception. Responses were equally split over this somewhat controversial concept. Some advisors believe registration is the same as advising, others disagree. Registration is often perceived as purely clerical or transactional work that can be performed by support staff. Conversely, advising is perceived as more transformational, helping to positively shape students' overall educational experience.

The perceived similarities and differences among the four-year advisors in identifying the factors that facilitate or inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year college or university virtually parallels the perceptions of the community college advisors. The advisors' overall perception of the role of an advisor, that is, what advisors perceive they should do, differs from what they actually practice. A number of potential barriers that may limit their ability to advise effectively mirror the barriers identified by the community college advisors: interest level, training, motivation, access to information and time commitment.

Advisors at the four-year university are comprised mostly of fulltime faculty with some non-faculty members in certain departments. All fulltime faculty are required to advise an assigned number of students based on a student's chosen major. Nonfaculty advisors are also assigned students within the schools enrolling larger numbers of students. Nearly two-thirds of the advisors feel advising should be considered in the promotion and tenure process. The majority of advisors feel advising is not being evaluated but expressed strong sentiment that it should be, using a combination of methods like the community college advisors.

The most distinguishing difference between what the community college and the university advisors perceived as the factors that facilitate and inhibit a smooth transfer from a community college to a four-year university was the satisfaction level of the advising process at each institution. Fewer than ten percent of the university advisors were satisfied with the current advising process as compared to the sixty percent satisfaction rate of the community college advisors. Forty-one percent of the university advisors were dissatisfied whereas ten percent of the community college advisors admitted to being dissatisfied with the current advising process.

### *Conclusions and Discussion*

Transfer is of great importance on the community college campus. “Transfer is important because the community colleges serve as the point of first entry to higher education for many students who would not otherwise be able to attend college. More than one third of the people beginning college in America begin in a community college and the figures are much higher for members of minority groups. These institutions are an essential component of a democratic system of higher education—one that seeks to acculturate the citizenry and to make opportunity for further education available to all,” (Cohen, 1984). To facilitate the success of transferring students, two-year community colleges have an obligation to ensure that students receive appropriate and accurate instruction and advice (Eaton, 1988).

Advising often occurs using some combination of faculty, professional advisors, counselors, peer advisors, and paraprofessionals. In many delivery systems, more than one type of advisor may be utilized. Faculty, however, play a vital role in nearly all advising systems (Pardee, 2000).

Advisors at Steel City Community College support and encourage a positive perception of advising. The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the overall current advising process. Many of the advisors agree with the concept that advising is not only an important part of a successful college experience, advising can be viewed as an extension of teaching. Crookston never proposed that faculty advisors were doing a poor job, rather, he sought to create a paradigm shift where advising would be seen as a legitimate extension of teaching and research (Erdman, 2004; Wade & Yoder, 1995).

Crockett (1978) refers to advising as the “cornerstone” of student retention and stresses that the institutions must “recognize that academic advising is an integral part of the higher education process, not a minor support service only tangentially related to the purposes of the institution” (p.29).

Advisors at Three Rivers University held slightly different perceptions of the role of an advisor. Theoretically, the majority of respondents agreed that advising is important and provides an essential service to students. Their actual practice, however, gives an outward impression that advising is more of an administrative service rather than a cognitive skill that enhances the learning experience. Crockett (1978) believes advising is not just a service an institution provides for altruistic reasons but rather is an important part of the framework an institution utilizes as it goes about its purpose of educating students.

Tinto (1987) claimed that quality-advising services were important for all students, not just those in academic trouble, and that good advising is an essential component in any effective retention program.

The two prevailing models of academic advising most often described are the prescriptive and the developmental model. These models represent the poles on a continuum defined by the nature of the student-advisor relationship and the tasks associated with the role of the advisor (Crookston, 1972; Kramer, 2000; O’Banion, 1972). The model receiving the most emphasis varies widely between campuses. Most institutions use a combination of advising models, modifying the approach for specific student populations or colleges within the university (Habley, 2000; King, 1995; Kramer, 1995).

Steel City Community College implements a combination of advising models. Advisors are primarily fulltime faculty who express an interest in advising students combined

with a few fulltime staff advisors such as the transfer specialist who advise in an advising center. Three Rivers University promotes developmental advising in theory. They utilize a satellite system which includes both fulltime faculty and staff advisors; however, the actual advising practices appear to resemble a more prescriptive model in nature. It is important to reiterate that all faculty are required to advise at TRU whether they want to or not. The fact that advising is mandated may create a negative interest in advising students.

While the prescriptive model is appropriate for certain populations or specific issues, it may oversimplify questions that are symptomatic of a larger issue (Crookston, 1972). Habley (1994) contended that prescriptive models are likely to fail because they focus upon course selection and scheduling rather than the goals and values underlying decisions about persistence and program choice.

O'Banion (1972) suggested an advising system where different dimensions of the model would be delivered by different professionals. O'Banion (1972) noted, "... who does advising is probably not as important as the philosophy of the institution that supports the academic advising program and the commitment and understanding with which the counselor or instructor approaches the process."

The actual practice of advising has been slow to change (Habley & Morales, 1998; O'Banion, 1994) at all institutions of higher education, but particularly at large research-intensive institutions (Habley, 2000). Frost (2000) noted the culture of higher education is slow to change, but some criticize advising models other than the traditional prescriptive model as an added strain on faculty who have little background or interest in student development theory and practice (Hemwall & Tratche, 1999). Others have found that the strain may be a result of limited faculty development in the advising role (Grites & Gordon,

2000; Kopera, 1998; Ryan 1995) or that their workload simply does not allow the time necessary to practice advising methods other than prescriptive (Erdman, 2004; Kelly, 1995; Seim, 1994). Advisors often default to prescriptive advising simply because it is less time consuming and puts the burden of responsibility on the student.

Automated advising tools have decreased the clerical nature of the process, allowing more time for developmental advising but leaving many advisors and students questioning the purpose of advising (Erdman, 2004; Kramer & McCauley, 1995; McCauley, 2000; Teitelbaum, 2000). The increased availability of information on computers and preferences for electronic communication (Erdman, 2004; Steel & Gordon, 2001) are driving a new kind of advising paradigm shift. Technology has enhanced the advising function in many ways; however, there still remain a number of issues relative to the role of an advisor.

Many institutions of higher education expect faculty to have some advising responsibilities. Few, however, receive formal training regarding expectations for advising students. According to Habley and Morales (1998), ninety-eight percent of institutions expect faculty to advise. Despite this high expectation to perform the advising role, only about one-third of institutions provide training and development in this area. Of those institutions providing development, few require faculty participation in it (Boyer, 1990; Erdman, 2004; Habley & Morales, 1998).

Ryan (1995) added that one individual is no longer able to maintain the large volume of information needed to fulfill teaching, research, and student advising needs. Advisors cannot possibly learn all the details and provide all the services students need, but they must have knowledge of available support and referral services (Erdman, 2004; Ryan, 1995; Upcraft & Stephens, 2000; White, 1995). According to Ryan, (1995) students want to

receive specific and accurate information from their advisors, and it is important that advisors either have the answers or that they know how and where to get them.

Faculty in particular report frustration with the lack of development for the advising role, most notably in the communication and developmental issues that would help them better understand and advise students (Erdman, 2004; Habley, 1998; Kelly, 1995; King, 2000; Ryan, 1995; Seim, 1994). In all of the studies reviewed, faculty reported that a lack of institutional training and support for advising limited their ability to perform advising to their personal expectations. Creamer and Scott (2000) maintained that effective advisors develop in systems where the institutional mission, resource allocations and evaluation standards reinforce consistent role expectations.

It would stand to reason that a vital element in determining the success of an advising system would be the advisors' perceived degree of overall satisfaction of the institution's advising process. If advisors are dissatisfied with the advising process—which would include training, information distribution, communication, resources, motivation or incentives—the quality of advising as a whole suffers, creating a serious barrier to effective advising. A poorly functioning advising process would have a direct negative impact on students. This negative impact is further compounded by students transferring from a community college to a four-year institution regardless of which institution has the ineffective advising system

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be made to minimize or in some cases eliminate the existing barriers that contribute to in-effective or poor advising. Barriers particularly impact negatively students transferring from a community college to a four-year college or university.

### *Recommendations*

The first recommendation is a need for clear communication of the role of an advisor. Administrators should articulate in very clear language precisely what the institution's expectations are of an academic advisor. Clearly identifying advisor expectations help eliminate and minimize individual interpretations and personal expectations of the role of an advisor.

The second recommendation is advisor interest in advising students and the significant impact it has on the advisors' perceptions of the advising process and his or her role as an advisor. Institutions that truly value advising and the benefits of effective or quality advising might well consider utilizing a system which identifies and selects only those members (faculty and non-faculty) who demonstrate a high level of interest in advising.

The third recommendation is to provide regularly scheduled training and development opportunities addressing specific advising skills and issues such as interpersonal communication, needs of specific student populations—such as transfer students—advising models, and effective collaboration with units supporting advising.

The fourth recommendation is to continue upgrading automated advising tools and technology for advisors. Items of priority might include easily accessible online handbooks, program and course descriptions, degree audits, recommended academic plans, an advising web page that addresses frequently asked questions, a transfer equivalency system that is updated regularly. Technology provides an easily accessible resource to clarify policies and procedures, requirements, changes and important contacts for other student support services.

The fifth recommendation is to develop separate advising programs unique to the individual college units which build on the distinctive qualities and capabilities of the

advisors and students in those colleges. Emphasis should be given to the process of balancing the advisee load and clerical requirements with other work responsibilities.

The final recommendation is to make a long-term commitment to support the advising programs throughout the institution. Structural changes to the advising system may be necessary to facilitate a positive perception of advising and of the role of an advisor.

#### *Suggestions for Further Research*

This study sought to examine the relationship between advisor perceptions of the importance of advising transfer students and their advising practices. The second purpose was to explore the similarities and differences of advisors perceptions from both a community college and a four-year university whose student population is comprised largely of transfer students. The final purpose was to identify advisors' perceptions of barriers that impede or prevent a smooth transition from a community college to a private four-year liberal arts university. While the study accomplished its purposes and answered the questions set forth in the problem statement, further research is possible in several related areas.

The researcher would suggest that future research expand the sample size to include a greater variety and diversity of institutions. Future studies in this area may wish to establish if differences exist between institutions utilizing certain advising delivery methods.

Future research might seek to identify if differences exist within colleges on a departmental level. In many institutions advising is departmentally controlled and the identification of differences in perceptions and the factors which influence those perceptions may be useful to improving advising within a college unit.

The researcher suggests that additional studies focus on administrators responsible for advising programs and their perceptions of advising and the factors which they perceive influence advising.

Future research might include a study that examines perceptions of characteristics of a suitable advisor from the student, faculty or administrator's perspective.

Future studies might also explore the students' perception of barriers to a smooth transition from a community college or for-profit institution to a four-year university.

Future research could attempt to resolve any differences between the findings of this study and what others cited in the literature have found.

### *Closing Thoughts*

While different models and systems of advising have received both criticism and praise, the actual practice of advising has been slow to change (Erdman, 2004; Habley, 2000). The concern about advising roles, techniques, rewards, and evaluation of advising have changed very little over time (Erdman, 2004; Habley & Morales, 1998; Mendelsohn, 1991; Seim, 1994; Templeton et al., 2001). Findings in this study closely resemble the findings of previous studies conducted nationally and locally. Frost (2000) noted the culture of higher education is slow to change, but the increased focus on student outcomes is pressuring universities to reconsider the delivery of many services, with special emphasis on advising.

Expectations, delivery systems, and procedures vary widely between and within campuses, especially at four-year universities. Before undertaking a substantial restructuring, institutions would be wise to explore a variety of models to select the one or ones that best suit its unique strengths and limitations (Erdman, 2004; Pardee, 2000).

Colleges and universities must explore and examine carefully the subtle differences of their student populations, organizational structure, and fiscal health to assure how best to deliver and support advising. Advising transfer students adds yet another layer of complexity to the potential barriers for an effective advising function.

With the rising number of students transferring from a community college to a four-year college or university, it is paramount that both institutions make a sincere effort to provide the most effective advising services to transfer students. This study set out to identify advisors' perceptions of barriers to a smooth transition from a community college to a four-year university. The study concluded that the perceptions of the advisors at both the Steel City Community College and Three Rivers University agree on the existence of barriers and that their perceptions of the importance and practice of the role of an advisor contributes to these barriers. The other barriers identified include: 1) level of interest, 2) training, 3) access to accurate information, 4) motivation or rewards, and 5) time constraints. Reiterating what several respondents noted in their responses to the open-ended questions, many of these barriers can be minimized with the support, cooperation and commitment of the administration together with the advisors in developing an advising process that utilizes a more holistic rather than prescriptive approach.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Informed Consent for Survey & Open-ended Questions**

Dear Educational Professional,

My name is Edith Geleskie. I am a graduate student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and an academic advisor at The Pennsylvania State University at Greater Allegheny campus. My dissertation study is entitled “Advisors’ Perceptions of Barriers to a Smooth Transition from a Community College to a Four-year University”. The study is being conducted under the advisement of Dr. George Bieger in the College of Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

The study has three primary purposes. First, the study seeks to determine the relationship between the perceived importance and the actual practice of academic advising with an emphasis on advising transfer students. The second purpose is to identify advisors’ perceived barriers to delivering effective advising of transfer students. The final purpose is to explore how perceptions differ based on professional characteristics of advisors and counselors who work directly with transfer students.

As an educational professional, you are invited to participate in this 2 step confidential study which includes completing the attached electronic survey (step 1) and if you choose to, complete the follow up interview questions (step 2).

I realize your time is valuable and have attempted to keep the survey and interview questions as brief as possible. Together the survey and questions will take approximately 20 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Responses will be kept confidential. You are free to participate or not in this study or to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence. Your name will not be reported in any way nor will it be associated with your responses in any data analysis. Your responses will be considered only in combination with those of other participants.

Your participation is very important to the success of this project. Advising is a dyadic relationship between students and their advisors—both faculty and non-faculty—whose views are virtually absent in the literature. You can provide valuable insight into this complex yet necessary role of advising students transferring from a community college to a four-year university. If you agree to voluntarily participate in my study, please print out the advising survey and follow up interview questions. Complete the survey and the interview questions—at your discretion—and return them both in a sealed envelope to the Provost’s office addressed to Jan Ryan’s attention within two weeks. Completing the survey and the questions and returning them implies your informed consent. Thank you for your cooperation and participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Edith M. Geleskie  
Doctoral Student at IUP  
Phone: 412-766-8854  
Email: [emgeleskie@toast.net](mailto:emgeleskie@toast.net)

**This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board  
for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730)**

APPENDIX B

ADVISING SURVEY

Please circle all that apply:

Faculty    Staff    (if staff, what is your primary role) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2-yr. or 4-yr. Institution

**Section One: Advising Tasks and Skills.** Each statement should be rated on two scales. On the first line, mark the extent to which you feel the statement *should* be part of the advisor’s role. On the second line, mark the extent to which you *actually* perform that role. A “1” indicates the statement should not be a role or is actually never done. A “5” indicates that the statement should definitely be a role or is actually preformed with all advisees.

1 = not a role/never done  
 5 = definitely a role/always done

- |  |                 |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Assist students in understanding how their coursework will transfer to another institution.             | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Explain to students how transfer credits are evaluated .  | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Accurately explain academic requirements to advisees.   | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Assist students in selecting programs appropriate to their abilities and interest.                      | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Assist advisees with course selection to enhance career aspirations.                                    | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Explain advanced standing evaluations and transfer credits to student relative to their program choice. | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Discuss long-term goals.  | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Inform students of career paths taken by graduates in the program                                       | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Register students each term.  | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Know procedures for pre-registration drop/add, etc.  | <i>Should</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | <i>Actually</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1 = not a role/never done  
5 = definitely a role/always done

11. Educate students on how to access registration information (i.e., Web Advisor, Schedule).	<i>Should</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Actually</i>	1	2	3	4	5
12. Know what resources and services to which an advisee may be referred.	<i>Should</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Actually</i>	1	2	3	4	5
13. Inspire students to accept responsibility for their academic planning.	<i>Should</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Actually</i>	1	2	3	4	5
14. Explore how non-academic issues (i.e., work, activities, commuting) may influence the student's ability to manage the credit load attempted.	<i>Should</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Actually</i>	1	2	3	4	5

**Section Two: Barriers to Effective Advising.** Section two asks for your perceptions about issues that may limit your ability to advise effectively. For each statement, mark the extent to which you agree with the statement. A “1” indicates strongly disagree. A “5” indicates strongly agree.

1= Strongly disagree  
5= Strongly agree

15. I am not interested in advising students.		1	2	3	4	5
16. I do not have the time to meet with students.		1	2	3	4	5
17. It is difficult to advise non-traditional students due to time limitations.		1	2	3	4	5
18. I do not have accurate information about how coursework will transfer to another institution.		1	2	3	4	5
19. I do not clearly understand the procedures for academic advising.		1	2	3	4	5
20. I do not know how to use advising technology.		1	2	3	4	5
21. I am not comfortable facilitating career planning and goal setting.		1	2	3	4	5
22. I do not know the specific academic requirements of programs.		1	2	3	4	5
23. Registration is not the same as advising and should be done by professional staff.		1	2	3	4	5
24. Our institution does not have clear transfer articulation agreements.		1	2	3	4	5
25. We have transfer agreements, but I have had no training in understanding these.		1	2	3	4	5

1= Strongly disagree  
5 = Strongly agree

26. Transfer and/or articulation agreements should be managed by professional staff. 1 2 3 4 5
27. My school does not have trained personnel to assist transfer students. 1 2 3 4 5
28. The lack of rewards for quality advising makes it a lower priority. 1 2 3 4 5
29. I do not know about career options for majors/programs I advise. 1 2 3 4 5

**Section Three: Advisor Characteristics** Section three asks for professional characteristics and perceptions about workload as it relates to the delivery of advising. **Please circle the number to the right that corresponds to your selected answer below the question.**

30. Faculty status: 1. Tenured 2. Not Tenured 1 2 3 4 5

31. Which best describes your training for advising? 1 2 3 4 5

1. Self-taught
2. Mentored by another faculty member
3. Formal workshop
4. Department Meetings
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

32. Which one of the following best describes how advising is assessed in your department/college ? 1 2 3 4 5

1. It isn't
2. Student Satisfaction
3. Administrator Feedback
4. Peer Review
5. Combination of Method

33. Which one of the following best describes how advising should be assessed? 1 2 3 4 5

1. It shouldn't
2. Student Satisfaction
3. Administrator Feedback
4. Peer Review
5. Combination

1 = Strongly disagree  
5 = Strongly agree

34. To what extent do you agree with the statement 1 2 3 4 5

“Advising should be considered in the promotion and tenure process”.

1 = Strongly Disagree      5 = Strongly Agree

35. How satisfied are you with the advising process? 1 2 3 4 5

1 = Extremely Dissatisfied      5 = Extremely Satisfied

36. In which college do you advise? \_\_\_\_\_

37. Approximately what percentage of your time is spent on advising and related tasks? \_\_\_\_\_

38. How many undergraduates do you currently advise? \_\_\_\_\_

39. How many of these advisees are distances students? \_\_\_\_\_

40. In how many majors/programs do you advise? \_\_\_\_\_

41. How many years have you been advising? \_\_\_\_\_

42. **Comments:** Please provide additional comments in the space below on advising issues that were not addressed in the survey or that may aid in interpreting responses.

## APPENDIX C

### OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. As a faculty/staff member, do you see academic advising as an extension of your classroom teaching, or as a service activity that you do because it counts toward merit promotion/tenure?
2. Does your institution have a clear policy as to how credits transfer from other institutions to your own? Are you familiar with the policy?
3. How does technology play a role in the way you advise students?
4. What would you recommend as a reasonable number of students assigned for you to advise?
5. What suggestions would you make to help get faculty “buy in” on advising students when it is not addressed in their job description?
6. Do you feel you are equipped with the appropriate tools necessary to provide effective advising to transfer students?
7. What would you say is the most valuable advice you give to all students?

## APPENDIX D

**From:** Ryan, Jan **On Behalf Of** Perkins, Charles  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2008 10:17 AM  
**Subject:** Doctoral Student Research Study

Edie Geleskie, a doctoral candidate at IUP working on her dissertation and a former University employee, has received my permission to seek faculty and advising staff participation in her doctoral research study on advising. This study is not sponsored by the University and is strictly voluntary. I have agreed to forward her request to help her achieve her degree.

Attached you will find the two documents she has furnished: an Informed Consent letter that explains the purpose of the study and the Advising Survey/ Follow up Interview questions.

Should you wish to participate, please place your completed survey in a sealed envelope and return to Jan Ryan, Provost's Office. Results are confidential and no one at Point Park University will see the completed surveys; we are merely serving as a collection point for Ms. Geleskie.

Thank you.

Charles A. Perkins

Provost