

ALL ABOUT ME: COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STUDENTS

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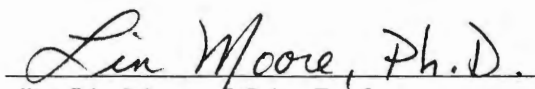
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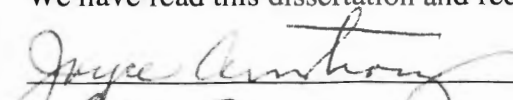
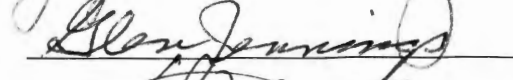
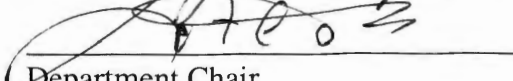
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:


I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Elaine Zweig entitled "All About Me: Community College Child Development/Early Childhood Education Students." I have examined this Dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Child Development.


Dr. Lin Moore, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:




Department Chair

Accepted:


Dean of the Graduate School

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Ruth Zweig and my late father, Lawrence Zweig
Always believing that I could do whatever I set my mind to do; and I did!

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I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all those who have supported me in the completion of this dissertation. Many people have guided me at various stages. I want to especially thank my Ph. D committee. To Dr. Lin Moore, my committee chair, for her unending dedication and devotion to the field of child development and early childhood education, and most importantly, her belief in me by unselfishly giving her time, expertise, knowledge, enthusiasm, wisdom, laughter and shoulder during my research project. I could not ask for a better mentor and model.

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Thanks go to the Child Development and Education faculty at Collin College and most specifically to Sharon Hirschy, Leda Cott, Eric Yeager, Keri Harvey, Jennifer Quong, Nita Thomason, Glenda Strange, Susy Mathews, Barbara Batista, Janet Galantay, Ruth Payton and Sharyn Art for their encouragement, support, assistance and belief in me. I could never have done it alone. I would like to express my deep gratitude to my mother Sissy, my late father Larry, my sister Linda, my brother Leigh and my children, Elizabeth and Jonathan for their unconditional love and support, Judy, Janet, Jaime and grandchildren, Adam, James, Joseph and Emily for their love. Thanks also go to my cousins, Ellen and Harvey for their belief in me and constant encouragement. Without my family's support, my goal would not have the chance to be complete.

ABSTRACT

ELAINE ZWEIG

ALL ABOUT ME: COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STUDENTS

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The purpose of this cross-sectional descriptive study was to describe currently enrolled students in Child Development/Early Childhood Educator programs in community colleges across the state of Texas. This included students at every stage of their community college education whether they were beginning or completing degrees, certificates or obtaining training hours.

The students were asked to complete an internet survey, *Community College: All About Me*, developed by the researcher with an adapted section from the Transfer Student Survey. The instrument used a Likert Scale to identify students' concerns and preparedness for academia, reasons for working, selections about courses, and the frequency and importance of college services and programs. Items included background information, importance of college goals and outcomes, student work schedules, importance of reasons students work while in college, transitions to another college, contributions to the success of students at the college, demographics, and an open-ended question related to concerns about completing a degree or certificate.

Data were collected from 1,047 currently enrolled students from 15 colleges that were classified as rural, urban, and suburban community colleges with child development and early

childhood education programs. Similarities and differences were found among the patterns of responses from rural, urban, and suburban students. Results indicated that traditional students from 18 years to 25 years comprised 52.3% and nontraditional students from 26 years to 60+ years made up 47.7% of the total sample. The racial/ethnic make-up of the sample was diversified. A majority of students lived with family or relatives and worked full-time off-campus jobs while attending college. The highest intended degrees were Bachelor's (41.5%), Master's (32.2%), Associates of Applied Science (13.3%), and more advanced professional degrees (7.4%). Students intended to work in child care, public school or other fields.

Students' perceptions of college services and programs were reported by frequency of use and importance. These services and programs compared classifications. Financial aid ranked first for rural and urban students; it did not rank in the top five for suburban students. Libraries and academic advising were rated very important in all classifications. Family support and professors who were experienced and knowledgeable were very important based on students' ratings by rural, urban and suburban settings.

The findings have implications for college chairpersons, faculty, students and administrators. No one strategy met the needs of all students. Rural, urban, and suburban colleges have their own unique set of characteristics requiring them to design programs according to their specific needs, resources, and population. Recommendations for future research were addressed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Who are child development and early childhood education students in community college programs across the state of Texas? What are their needs, interests, and expectations? How can they be supported to successfully meet their goals? What can community college faculty and administrators do to retain these students and complete the child development and early childhood education programs?

The Texas Child Development and Early Childhood Education (hereafter, CDECE) programs serve a unique population of students. Adequate, professional, and ethical preparation of students who will work with children and families is the primary focus of the field of CDECE. It is, therefore, important to assess the characteristics of and challenges faced by the students who populate these programs. Although networking organizations, such as the Child Development Educators Association (CDEA) within the Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA), exist at the state level, there is a lack of specific information regarding the characteristics of CDECE students.

Statement of the Problem

Who are CDECE students in Texas community colleges? Because these students will ultimately directly impact youth and families in a meaningful way, it is important to be cognizant of their demographic and learning profiles. There is a lack of literature, not

only concerning this population, but also about which important factors would best support students' success.

What are the needs of the Child Development and Early Childhood Education students? How can they be supported to successfully meet their goals and complete degrees? The population at community colleges is broad because community colleges are less stringent than most universities in their enrollment policies. Students represent a large diversity of backgrounds, and some enroll with no intentions of obtaining a degree. Many community college students who start with the goal of a baccalaureate degree fade away due to other life choices (Townsend, 2007). Community college students often face many personal and academic challenges. Students who subsequently transfer from community colleges to universities may encounter barriers (Townsend, 1993). Changing environments, changing relationships, differing policies and procedures, and differing expectations have been identified as the barriers for transfer students (Townsend & Ignash, 2000),

What can faculty and administrators do to retain Child Development and Early Childhood Education students in Texas? Students who drop out may enroll in another college or university where the environment is more compatible with their academic capabilities and psychological needs; alternatively, they may pursue a future where completion of a bachelor's degree is no longer a goal (Hill, 1965; Townsend, 1994; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003). Community colleges are less likely to retain students due to open-door policies and the competing personal and job-related challenges faced by commuting students (Craig & Ward, 2008). Institutions and programs need to conduct

targeted research to determine the important factors for students' success reflected by retention, degree completion, and transition to work or transfer to a university.

Rationale for the Study

The philosophy and approach of early childhood education programs is articulated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). According to the THECB, these programs focus

on the intellectual, social, emotional, and biological development of children and the planning and design of related human services. They include instruction in parent-child relations; parenting practices; special needs of children; parental and environmental influences on child development; external support services, and related public policy issues.

(THECB, 2009, p. 3)

As reflected in the CDECE programs' focus from the THECB's statement above, higher education assumes great homogeneity among community colleges in terms of state-assigned missions and functions, organizational complexity, finances, and students served. It is imperative to describe the development of an inclusive, easily accessible methodology for practitioners, state and federal policymakers, and researchers using objective criteria to classify 2-year institutions (McCormick & Cox, 2003). The 2005 Basic Classifications address Townsend's (2002) concern that 2-year colleges need to be viewed through frames appropriate to 2-year colleges and not by applying 4-year frames to 2-year institutions (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007).

Community Colleges in the United States

Community colleges came into existence around 1900 (Dougherty, 1987, 1994, 2003), and the community college movement continues to grow. It has become clear that, as neighborhood institutions, the proximity offered by community colleges has given many people expanded access to higher education in an economic climate of increasing tuition and fees (Dougherty, 1987; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Both traditional and nontraditional students can bridge the gap from high school to 4-year institutions by earning an associate's degree (Standiford, Lynch, & Bliss, 2003). Community colleges have also played a critical role in preparing employees for the workforce, particularly through career-technical education and workforce training in occupational fields that have experienced worker shortages (Gray & Herr, 1998). Over the past decade, vocational education has undergone an important transformation, shifting focus from preparing students for entry-level jobs to preparing them for employment in careers that require a broad set of academic, technical, and employable skills (Bragg, 2002). Community colleges have been an integral part of this educational and vocational transformation.

Although public community colleges were established to improve access to higher education, access for all may result in chronically low performance (Craig and Ward, 2008). Tinto (2007) stated that the key to effective retention involves a strong commitment to quality education and the building of a robust sense of inclusive educational and social community on campus. One key means of creating this environment and thereby reducing student attrition is to explore the development of a

student identity. Baird (2009) defines student identity as a student's ability to make friends, join groups, participate in activities, and access educational resources. These factors have an impact on academic success.

With an increasing number of nontraditional students at all types of postsecondary institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), new challenges are faced by faculty members in providing effective instruction. Across the country in 200X, approximately 31% of all undergraduates identified themselves as moderately nontraditional students, and 47% of all nontraditional students chose to enroll in 4-year universities. This demographic shift has created a typical classroom in which there are both traditional and nontraditional students, resulting in an interesting predicament for faculty. This instructional challenge is derived not only from the fact that nontraditional students are older learners with different experiences than those of traditional students, but also because teachers have a limited understanding of nontraditional students' expectations of classroom communication (Houser, 2002). Houser addresses the expectations of nontraditional students in her studies in three categories. Nontraditional students want an instructor who is open to student opinions, allows for frequent class discussion, knows students as individuals, and offers and elicits personal examples relevant to the material. It is incumbent upon college faculty to develop effective communication and pedagogy for both traditional and nontraditional students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) acknowledges there is no precise definition for nontraditional students, but suggests that part-time status and age are common characteristics in most definitions.

The new reality of higher education represents a fundamental shift in student demographics. More nontraditional students are seeking educational opportunities, and traditional students are choosing alternative modes of curriculum delivery (Skopek & Schuhmann, 2009). As a result, community colleges and universities are moving to meet the needs of this growing contingency of new atypical student populations and evolving student expectations (Ayers, 2002). It is important to look specifically at the population of CD/ECE students to determine the proportions of traditional and nontraditional learners.

Community Colleges in Texas

In Texas, public community colleges are uniquely positioned to offer advanced training for students. Texas's public 2-year institutions present opportunities to learn skills quickly and at a reasonable cost. The growing population in Texas will supply employers with a steady stream of qualified workers. For the state's economy to grow, it will be critical that educational attainment is improved. The state's demographic trends have important implications for all educational institutions in regards to an increased expectation of a larger and more racially and ethnically diverse student body (NCES, 2007). After 2000, enrollment at Texas's community colleges grew rapidly, rising 31% between 2000 and 2007. Enrollment at 4-year universities grew by 19.9% over the same time period (THECB, 2007). An examination of CDECE programs in community colleges throughout the state of Texas provides a detailed description defining populations of enrolled students. Rather than dividing the state by northern, southern, eastern, and western regions, a more practical approach was needed.

2005 Carnegie Classification System for 2-Year Colleges

The 2005 Carnegie Classification System for 2-year colleges, (Katsinas & Lacey, 2003; Hardy & Katsinas, 2006) provides a framework for understanding the structure of these diverse and rapidly-expanding institutions. The classification system differentiates between single campus and multicampus institutions and governance structures, as well as dividing publicly and independently controlled institutions into separate property spaces. This model also captures geographic settings, distinguishing between rural, urban, and suburban population areas, and provides institutional enrollment profiles of the community colleges.

The differences and similarities among rural, urban, and suburban institutions can be used to inform and improve policy and practice. This classification system created a lens through which community colleges may be examined, allowing research to contribute in more meaningful ways to what is known about these institutions. The 2005 Carnegie classification system was utilized to compare the needs, interests, and expectations of CD/ECE students in rural, urban, and suburban community colleges in Texas who participated in this study.

Statement of Purpose

The purposes of the study were (a) to describe the populations of CDECE majors at community colleges in Texas, (b) to determine students' goals and concerns, and (c) to determine the effectiveness of community college support services and programs.

The current study focused on Child Development and Early Childhood Education majors attending community colleges in the state of Texas. It is critical that community

colleges describe the populations they are serving as well as how these institutions can better prepare students in making successful transitions into child development and early childhood education programs in 4-year institutions or into the workforce (Monroe & Richtig, 2000). An awareness of the student population being served and the outcomes of these students will also help to determine program effectiveness and inform resource allocation.

Another area of research concerns the effectiveness of different support services and programs. Such an examination is needed to help guide the allocation of scarce financial resources into areas that are most beneficial to students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Partnerships and articulation agreements, the result of community colleges and universities working together, may also serve the student population by supporting student success and assisting students in meeting their goals (Flaga, 2006).

In the state of Texas, there are 50 community college districts; 20 of these districts offer Child Development or Early Childhood Education associate degrees and certificates (THECB, 2001). Within the 20 districts, covering rural, urban, and suburban institutions with both single and multicampuses, 61 Child Development and Early Childhood Education programs offer certificates, degrees, or preparation or training in Early Childhood Education.

The Child Development Educators Association (CDEA) is a state group of 35 programs dedicated to bettering Child Development and Early Childhood Educators in the state of Texas. Fifteen of the Program Chairpersons chose to participate in this study and served as data sites. These programs serve approximately 5,800 students in Child

Development and Early Childhood Education across Texas. Chairpersons and faculty recruited students from the Child Development and Early Childhood Education programs in community colleges in Texas. The students were asked to complete an internet survey that investigated (a) background information on the students, (b) preparedness and concerns for the workforce or academia, (c) importance of college goals and outcomes, (d) student work schedules, (e) importance of reasons a student works while in college, (f) selections about courses, (g) frequency and importance of college support services, (h) transitions to another college and contributions to the success of the student at the college, and (i) demographics. The research questions discussed below correspond to selected sections of the survey.

Research Questions

What are students' similarities and differences when compared across urban, suburban, and rural community college districts? More specifically,

1. What are students' personal characteristics in terms of age, gender, course enrollment, credit hour completion, employment, and parents' education?
2. What are students' college goals?
3. What are students' concerns and perceptions of preparedness?
4. What are students' perceptions of college services and programs?
5. What are students' support systems?

Definitions

Nontraditional college students are defined as adult learners over 25 years old who have delayed their college education. Additionally, this group includes college students who are married, cohabiting, separated, divorced, or widowed

Program retention is defined as a system for tracking students in a degree program over time (Center for the Study of College Student Retention, 2008).

Traditional college students are defined as younger adults who begin college immediately after completing their high school education (at about 18 years old).

A duplicated student is defined as a student who is enrolled in more than one child development course and is included in the population count.

Assumptions

The following assumptions guided the study:

1. The chairpersons of community college Child Development and Early Childhood Education programs directed their students to the electronic link for the survey.
2. The participants shared their insights and experiences.

Delimitations

The only criterium used to establish the parameters of the proposed study was enrollment in a Child Development or Early Childhood Education programs in a community college in Texas.

Limitations

The following represented the potential weaknesses of the proposed study:

1. A small sample of students participated in the survey and may not be representative of the larger population.
2. Sections of the instrument were adapted from a tool that was originally designed for students after transfer to a university.
3. Students who voluntarily participate may be different from those who do not participate.

Summary

This chapter justified the present study and the need to identify the population of Child Development and Early Childhood Education majors in community colleges in the state of Texas. Student success and retention are related to student fit within an institution, which is an intricate matter dependent on the student's characteristics, the nature of the college, the student's experiences within the college, and the student's desired goals and outcomes (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). There is a gap in the literature in the needs of higher education students and what colleges provide, particularly as it pertains to students enrolled in CDECE programs.

In order to better serve this population, community college faculty and administrators need to promote success, retention, effective transitions to work and 4-year universities for Bachelor's degrees and/or upper division coursework. The literature lacks studies on students in CDECE programs. This study is a first step in researching a solution for student success in community colleges across the state of Texas by collecting data from the students who are currently enrolled. The results of this study will inform chairpersons and faculty in program concerning student needs, goals and motivations which in turn

will allow them to better serve students by assisting them in successfully meeting their goals, such as obtaining a degree or certificate from the community college, transitioning into the workforce, or transferring to another university.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Dating back to the early years of the 20th century, the American community college emerged as the result of workers needing to be educated for expanding industries. Public community colleges also more generally improved access to higher education (Craig & Ward, 2008). The traditional focus of community colleges was on the mission of transfer, community development, and vocational education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). This has shifted over time from an emphasis on vocational education to an emphasis on community development and transfer in many institutions.

Although getting students into college is important, retaining and helping them complete their degree work is vital to the economic and social health of the nation (Education Commission of the States, 2004). This study addressed the following concerns for CDECE students in Texas: How do academic and nonacademic factors influence a student's decision to stay in or leave college? What do we know about the traditional and nontraditional students who attend community colleges? What do we know about the Texas community college system in rural, urban, and suburban settings? What do we know about the students who enroll in CDECE programs in Texas?

Factors Influencing Programs

Populations: What Does the Student Population Look Like?

Various researchers have provided snapshots of different student populations. According to Wawrzynski and Sedlacek (2003), students entering higher education are a complex and diverse student population with varied educational, economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

For instance, with a sample comprised of 2,492 incoming transfer students at a mid-Atlantic doctoral extensive public university, Wawrzynski and Sedlacek (2003) found that the students were 53% female, 14% African American, 14% Asian American or Pacific Islander, 6% Hispanic/Latino/a, 65% White, and had a mean age of 2.8. During their university orientation, students completed the Transfer Student Survey (Wawrzynski, Kish, Balon, & Sedlacek, 1999). Multivariate statistical analysis revealed differences by race and gender for expectations, academic behaviors, and learning outcomes. The results of this research indicated that transfer students do not all share the same experiences and expectations when transferring to a new institution (Wawrzynski et al., 1999).

Three thematic areas of difference emerged from the results of the study: expectations, learning outcomes, and academic behaviors of transfer students. In regard to expectations, male students reported more interest in the academic aspects of a college education than the social aspects, whereas female students had a more holistic expectation for their education. Females were more interested in obtaining a well-rounded education and joining campus organizations. Male students were more interested

in working with faculty on a research project. With respect to learning outcomes, the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, was more important to women than it was to men. Women wanted to acquire knowledge and skills in their academic interest area and knowledge that would complement and enhance their academic interests. Men listed learning to think and reason and developing leadership skills as important parts of their college education.

During the last 2 decades, increasing numbers of adult learners, students of color, and women joined the traditional student population in higher education. These groups are heavily represented in the student population, which includes students at all levels of academic preparedness (Cohen, Brawer & Evelyn, 2002). Furthermore, race and sex can also create obstacles to entrance into 4-year universities (Liu & Liu, 1999; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003). In the *Journal of College Student Development*, Wawrzynski and Sedlacek, (2003) conducted a study on race and gender differences in the student experiences. Findings from this study revealed differences by race and gender in students' expectations, academic behaviors, and learning outcomes. In particular, the research reported that having a strong support person was critical for the success of students of color as well as being able to negotiate a diverse environment.

These studies largely focus on the issue of transfer from the perspective of a student at a 4-year institution. It is likely that issues not only exist for community college students, but also that the concerns may be divergent. Community colleges need to be aware of the characteristics and barriers of this group in order to be prepared for this population's various needs (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

Traditional and Nontraditional Students

The image of the traditional college student is going to a community college directly after high school and then immediately transferring to a 4-year college upon the completion of an associate's degree to pursue a baccalaureate degree (Eddy, Christie, & Rao, 2006). The traditional college student is not the typical student that attends a community college. Community college students are typically older on average, are more likely to go to school part time, are often financially independent, and are more likely to have dependents (CCSSE, 2002). Because community colleges now serve approximately half of all college students, it is critical to assess the needs and attributes of this group.

A study explored by Eddy, Christie, and Rao (2006) focused on the prominent role that community colleges played in local regions in serving half of the undergraduates enrolled in college using data from the national longitudinal High School and Beyond 1980 Sophomore Cohort (HS&B/So). The HS&B dataset was derived from a multipurpose nationally representative longitudinal study of American high school students that surveyed almost 30,000 randomly selected students in over 1,000 randomly selected high schools in 1980, with biennial follow-up through 1992 and a final follow-up for the sophomore cohort. This study controlled for the types of students included in the analysis. In order to examine traditional students aspiring to a baccalaureate degree, the study included only 1980 high school sophomores who graduated from high school and entered a public 2-year college during 1982 or 1983.

Though not all students envision transfer when entering the community college, Eddy et al. (2006) restricted the sample focusing on students most representative of a

traditional college path in order to identify particular attributes of the group that made transfer more likely. The study further excluded students who indicated in a spring 1982 survey that the lowest educational attainment they would be satisfied with was less than a baccalaureate degree. Further exclusions were community college students who earned fewer than 12 semester hours of college credit. The number of students ultimately meeting these requirements decreased to 490. This allowed the researchers to target students having the traditional intention to attend a community college directly after high school to pursue an associate's degree and then immediately transfer to a pursue a bachelor's degree.

Several trends impacting transfer rates emerged from the data. Of the traditional students included in the dataset, 44.5% transferred, representing a larger number of transferring students than found in previous studies (Eddy et al., 2006). The largest impact on transfer was student socioeconomic status (SES), followed by whether students were enrolled full time when entering the community college. High school grades coupled with peer influence also predicted the success of community college transfer students.

The researchers stated that additional research using more recent longitudinal data would provide a more current view of transfer at the turn of the 21st century (Eddy et al., 2006). This study made clear that even traditional community college students need support on the pathway from the 2-year college to the 4-year institution. Therefore, studying the CDECE population might give insight into what this population of students looks like (e.g., retention and transfer rates, student goals, and support systems).

Academic and Nonacademic Factors in Retention

In examining the relationship between student characteristics and success, it is important to unearth and distinguish between academic and nonacademic factors that impact retention. Robbins et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of prior studies of full-time students enrolled in 4-year postsecondary institutions and used standardized measures to identify which nonacademic factors had the most salient relationship to retention. The nonacademic factors included motivation, self-regulation, social engagement, self-management, and socialization. This procedure allowed the identification of those factors that were the best indicators of the risk for college dropout. Traditional academic predictors of college retention, including SES, high school grade point average (GPA), and postsecondary readiness scores, were supported. Once identified, the salient nonacademic factors, together with the more traditional academic factors, were examined to see which yielded the best comparative indicators of risk for dropping out. Using results from 109 studies, Robbins et al. reported that academic self-efficacy was the best predictor of GPA, achievement motivation was the second-highest predictor of GPA, followed by financial support, academic goals, academic-related skills, and social involvement having some impact on GPA.

Robbins et al. (2007) presented at the University of Michigan Forum on Diversity, Merit and Higher Education, *What Works in Promoting Student Success*. Access to longitudinal data from 8th-, 10th- and 12th-grade files of 140,000 per cohort standardized test scores, information from a student readiness study of 15,000 students at 48 2-year and 4-year institutions moving into Year 6, and the use of National Student

Clearinghouse data furthered the study on student success. The results answered the question on why college students stay at 2-year and 4-year colleges. At the 2-year college, precollegiate academic preparation was the strongest predictor of all outcomes. Motivation was the factor that distinguished retained and graduating students on outcomes such as transfer and drop out. Social connections had effects only for those students who transferred to 4-year institutions, and SES distinguished all groups in the area of drop-out. High-SES students were likely to transfer, and low-SES students were more likely to drop out. The 4-year college student stayed because the first-year GPA had large effects on the likelihood of retention and transfer. Motivation and precollegiate academic preparation had indirect effects on retention and transfer by working through first-year GPA. SES was predictive of transfer behavior; specifically, the higher SES students transferred, whereas the poorer students tended to drop out. African-American students showed high commitment but had difficulty with classes, resulting in higher drop-out rates (Robbins et al., 2006). Common findings between 2- and 4-year studies are that academic preparation, SES, and academic discipline are all critical. First-year GPA is essential for 4-year students, and students who are socially connected are more likely to transfer upon 2-year graduation or remain at the 4-year college.

Social and emotional factors can influence the level of student engagement, student success and retention. These factors include personal issues that students' must deal with on a daily basis, often taking precedent over their studies (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). Szulecka, Springett, and DePauw (1987) have proposed that emotional factors

have a greater impact on the attrition of college freshmen than academic factors (as cited in Pritchard & Wilson, 2003).

Social factors, such as employment responsibilities, can affect student performance. A study conducted by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001) showed that work-related factors can affect students' GPAs. They found that full-time students who did not work usually had higher GPA's than full-time students who worked part-time. Also part-time students who worked full-time had significantly higher GPA's verses full-time students who worked part-time (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001). A student's work schedule can introduce additional time constraints that may affect their motivation to succeed and remain in college. Because community college students are more likely to be employed, community colleges serve a population that is distinctly different than that of 4-year institutions in ways that may impact GPA and transfer.

Retention

Vincent Tinto's Model

Tinto's model of retention has had the greatest influence on the understanding of student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). His model of theory about factors that affect student retention factors posits that students enter college with family and individual attributes as well as precollege schooling. Students enter with certain commitments, both to finishing college and to staying in college. The academic system is characterized by grade performance and intellectual development, which together lead to academic integration. A social system is entered where peer group interactions and faculty interactions lead to social integration. Academic and social integration work

together to influence ongoing goal and institutional commitments. These commitments then lead to the decision to remain in, or to leave college.

Tinto later revised this model to include commitments outside the institution and intentions to remain enrolled as well as failure to negotiate the rites of passage (NCES, 2001). According to this theory, students would remain enrolled in school if they separated themselves from their family and high school friends. They would engage in processes by which they identified with and took on the values of other students and faculty and committed themselves to pursuing those values and behaviors, thus moving on from the social and emotional place they were at when they first entered college.

Tinto's (1975) model of student attrition suggests that an individual's integration into a college's academic and social systems directly relates to the student's continued enrollment at that college. Tinto (1987) revised his model to incorporate prior intentions and external forces or commitments as additional determinants of a student's decision to withdraw. Townsend (1993) supports the concept that academic integration may play a greater role than social integration in persistence at nonresidential institutions. A number of studies have applied Tinto's model to community college students with varying results. Bers and Smith (1991) and Pascarella and Smart (1986) found that both academic and social integration have positive impacts on student progress. Further, Pascarella (1983) and Hapin (1990) found that academic integration is a stronger predictor of persistence than social integration.

John Bean's Models

Another theory on student retention came from Bean (1980, 1990). Later, a psychological model of student retention was developed by Bean and Eaton (2000). This was originally based on a model of turnover in work organizations but evolved into one where the overall structure was based on a psychological model that linked any given behavior, or in this case retention, with similar past behavior, normative values, attitudes, and intentions (Bean & Eaton, 2000). The model is similar to Tinto's in that it is complex and longitudinal, but differs by the inclusion of environmental variables and a student's intentions.

Bean's model described traditional students and posited that background variables, a student's high school educational experience, educational goals, and family support interacts with the college a student chooses. After matriculation, as in Tinto's model, the student then interacts with the institution academically and socially. Bean states that as the student interacts with the college, he or she is simultaneously influenced by environmental factors. This interaction leads the student to develop a set of attitudes toward oneself and toward college. In turn, these attitudes contribute to a student's decision to remain enrolled.

In an extension of this work, Bean and Eaton (2000) based their model of retention on psychological studies. They contended that undergraduate students' determination is influenced not only by their own characteristics, goals, and commitments, but also by their academic and social experiences while in college. They argued that background variables, particularly a student's educational experiences,

educational goals, and family support, influence the way a student interacts with the college the student attends. After matriculation, the student interacts with institutional members in the academic and social arena. These academic and social interactions enable students to develop a sense of belonging to the institution. With adequate academic and social integration into the educational community, students are likely to persist, unless external commitments work against their persistence.

Bean and Metzner (1985) developed a model for nontraditional students which reduced the emphasis on social integration factors given that nontraditional students (older, working, commuting) have less interaction with others on campus than do traditional, residential students. Although there are multiple approaches regarding student retention, the importance of integrating family and school constitutes an overriding sense of connectedness for the student to the institution and is important to a student's decision to remain in school.

Transfer Students

Studies have shown that transfer patterns have changed dramatically since the inception of community colleges (Townsend, 2007). Students with all types of associate degrees; Associate of Arts, Applied Science and Associate of Applied Science (AA, AS, and AAS) transfer to 4-year institutions. Although many students transfer to other postsecondary institutions after completing associate degrees, others seek entry into senior institutions before associate degree completion. Students with all types of associate degrees; Associate of Arts, Applied Science and Associate of Applied Science (AA, AS, and AAS) transfer to senior institutions. In the broader field of postsecondary education,

students today also transfer not only between institutions at the same level, but from community colleges to 4-year institutions and even from 4-year institutions to community colleges (Townsend, 2001).

Looking specifically at the transfer function of community colleges, some studies suggest that students who start at community college as opposed to the 4-year university tend not to achieve their stated goal of achieving a baccalaureate degree (Christie & Hutcheson, 2003). However, Eddy, Christie, & Rao (2006) examined the determinants of transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year college for traditional students. They restricted the sample to exclude students who merely took courses at a community college with no intention of seeking a baccalaureate degree, thereby narrowing the field of students to those who had intentions of transferring to 4-year institutions.

Using Tinto's (1993) model as a guide to variable selection, Eddy, Christie, and Rao (2006) examined and controlled for students' backgrounds, including such factors as gender, ethnicity, peer influence, family SES, skills, abilities, and prior schooling, social contacts with the institution and academic integration at the institution. The sample for the study was reported in this document under the heading, *Traditional and Nontraditional Students* from the *1980 Longitudinal High School and Beyond* study. Determinants of transfer were composite family SES, full-time initial community college enrollment, high school grades, influence and intention of further education high school friends, obtaining an associate's degree prior to transferring, college grades, and male gender (Eddy, Christie, & Rao, 2006).

Additionally, research studies on transfer students have focused on comparing transfer students to either (a) their first year counterparts at 4-year universities (Keeley & House, 1993; Laanan, 1999; Miville & Sedlacek, 1995, Townsend, 1994, 2000; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003), (b) students who originated and continued enrollment at the same university (Keeley & House, 1993; Laanan, 1999; Miville & Sedlacek, 1995, Townsend, 1994, 2000; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003), or (c) grouped students into minority and nonminority transfer students (Keeley & House, 1993; Laanan, 1999; Miville & Sedlacek, 1995, Townsend, 1994, 2000; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003). This trend has grown in recent years, resulting in a great deal of interest at both community college and 4-year institutions to develop programs to assist these students' transitions.

Eddy, Christie, and Rao (2006) found three major factors influencing the transferability of students. The first factor was SES: The higher the SES the higher the likelihood of transferring. The second factor was whether the student was a full-time student or a part-time student; full-time students tended to transfer more to higher institutions and lastly, the researchers found higher transfer rates in states where community colleges and 4-year institutions had formalized explicit articulation agreements. Obstacles to transferring include not receiving enough financial assistance, losing credits, and lack of academic training. With decreasing public financial assistance, more students have to work more hours and take less than a full-class load, which has a negative impact on their transferability (Eddy, Christie, & Rao, 2006). Interestingly, Eddy's recommendations point to the same factors accounting for retention issues for students as well.

According to Johnson (2005) although transfer students comprise a sizeable number of students in many 4-year universities, the factors that affect students' success after they transfer are poorly understood. He further asserts that a better understanding of the factors could help academic administrators, counselors, and teachers to ensure more capably the success and retention of students.

An increasing number of students have taken advantage of expanded access and lower tuition through the transfer function to pursue a baccalaureate degree (Evelyn, 2002). Despite the increasing numbers and importance of transfer students over the past decade, research studies on transfer students have not kept pace with the growth (Holaday, Takeda, Thurmond, & Stinard, 2004). This is an emerging educational area with significant potential for institutions to improve their performance.

Articulation Agreements

Students transferring from one higher educational institution to another are becoming more and more the trend. Transferring can occur from community college to university or vice versa. Even though many colleges and universities have open admissions, as more students from different backgrounds seek admission, more institutions have to revise their admission policies (Noonan, Sedlacek, & Veerasamy, 2005).

Townsend and Wilson (2006) noted that one factor that affects transfer is the formation and maintenance of articulation agreements, whether at the state, institutional, or programmatic level. These agreements include providing advisory services by community colleges and 4-year universities, as well as orientation to and availability of

support services at the 4-year institution. Relatedly, Liu and Liu (1999) argued that in order to understand student transfer in a sociological context, it is essential to view student departure not as an individual phenomenon but as related to the individual's precollege environment and as a basis for the individual student's post-college prospects and opportunities.

Students Perceptions of Institutions

Various researchers have investigated the wide-ranging perceptions of the community college (e.g. Dougherty 1987, 1994; Flaga 2006; Townsend, 1993; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). In general, the community college did not sufficiently prepare students for university expectations, at least not completely. In the university classrooms, feelings of competition kept students from asking questions for fear of looking stupid.

Students perceived university faculty as available for questions and meetings, but had mixed judgments about the professors' willingness to help (Townsend, 1993). However, the participants in Townsend and Wilson's (2006) study responded more negatively about the university as compared to community colleges. This qualitative study interviewed 19 students who were classified as transfer students and who had attended a community college before attending the 4-year institution. There were 9 women and 10 men, two self-identified as minority students, five self-identified as nontraditional in age, and 10 possessed an Associate of Arts degree. Many discussed their dislike of the large classes where professors would not notice or care if the participant attended class or not. Additionally, students did not feel they had a personal connection

with the professors, and some professors were more focused on their research than teaching since the focus of community college professors is teaching.

Students felt there had not been enough writing assignments required at the community college level. Furthermore, a community college was viewed as a place to encourage and help one another learn, and community college professors were sometimes considered more helpful. Students volunteered reasons for the discrepancy between the two institutions. The reason had to do with the makeup of the student populations. The community college's diverse population was seen as a deterrent to native-born students because anyone and everyone can go to community colleges (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Community colleges have a vested interest in a process that goes beyond the professionalism and compassion of individual instructors. Whereas certain professors or programs at more selective institutions may take pride in "weeding out" those students who "can't cut it," community colleges and their faculties are committed both by charter and by disposition to helping every student "cut it" (Jenkins, 2003, 2006). Jenkins stated that the focus is not on the professor, but on the student, the learner.

Student Survey

Due to the lack of literature written about CDECE students, the need to conduct a survey with this population of students across Texas served as an impetus for this study. Dr. Wawrzynski (2003) conducted a survey specifically for transfer students. However, this survey did not address the information wanted for this study of CDECE students.

Therefore, permission was granted by Dr. Wawrzynski to adapt and use the Transfer Student Survey for this study with the CDECE population of students.

Community Colleges in Texas

Approximately 1.2 million students were enrolled in Texas public and private higher education institutions in 2007. Of these, 48% or 587,244 students were enrolled in public 2-year institutions (THECB, 2007). Enrollment at these institutions is growing more rapidly than at public universities. Between 2000 and 2005, enrollment at public 2-year institutions grew by 26.4% compared to 17% at public universities (THECB, 2007). Texas has a variety of public 2-year institutions, including 50 community college districts, three 2-year campuses and a public technical college system with four campuses. Texas' 50 community college districts have multiple campuses scattered throughout the state and cater to students taking both academic (for eventual transfer to 4-year institution) and technical courses (THECB, 2007).

Some community college districts serve as many students as the state's largest universities, whereas others are the size of high schools. Dallas Community College, with a fall 2007 enrollment of 59,476, is the state's largest; the smallest is Ranger Community College in North Central Texas, with 813 students (Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2007).

A Community College-University Partnership

Collin College and Texas Woman's University were involved in a study that was conducted with students enrolled in Child Development courses in 2007 (Moore & Wilkinson, 2007). The purpose of the study conducted a needs assessment to determine

the factors that aid a smooth transition for students from community college to university enrollment, then retention in the Child Development and Teacher Education programs leading to degree completion and successful employment in professional positions in early childhood settings. The research interests that drove the study were (a) what could be done to promote a smooth transition for transfer students from community colleges, (b) how could community college and university faculty partner to ensure students' academic, personal, and professional success once students decided to transfer and enroll, and (c) what would reduce the likelihood of their attrition.

Research team members provided information about the project and distributed surveys in college classrooms, orientations, and on-line to a sample of more than 600 students. The survey identified barriers and concerns of CDECE teacher education students prior to and after transfer from Collin College (CC) to Texas Woman's University (TWU). A wide range of support systems for students determined what services were most valued and most utilized. Profiles of community college students and factors impacting educational success and completion at the associate's level were gathered. Focus groups provided opportunities for the voices of traditional and nontraditional students to be heard and allowed for more in-depth needs, personal and professional goals, and methods for retention gathered through discussion.

Students reported that favorites at the community college were professors who accommodated students' needs and helped them succeed, along with professors who were experienced and knowledgeable, and a laboratory school located on campus. Challenges faced during enrollment were that classes offered at CC could not be transferred to TWU,

some courses were not available every semester, and evening and weekend classes were difficult to find. Strategies used by students to overcome challenges were persistence, sought advice from faculty, classmates, and former students, substituted courses and support systems of professors, classmates, family and supervisors and colleagues at work. All individuals indicated that they would like to complete their degrees.

Concerns about transferring ranged from availability of evening classes at TWU or at off campus sites, accommodation of transfer students' needs, student-teacher ratio, relationships with professors, coping with the demands at the university, culture shock, and transferability of courses.

Participants suggested that TWU personnel become knowledgeable about the transfer students' background, availability of a course transfer list, TWU courses offered on CC's campus, TWU and CC faculty team teach students, TWU academic counselors visit CC and provide information about the transfer process. and that there be organized workshops on transfer procedures.

Based on preliminary findings, the CC & TWU Transfer Project proceeded with scheduled meetings between faculty members, reviewed and revised articulation agreements, reviewed degree plans and course offerings, offered CC students the opportunity to visit the TWU campus and offered TWU courses at CC's campus. As a result of this needs assessment between CC and TWU, further study into the CDECE population became increasingly important.

The Texas Association of Community Colleges

The Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) provided the following information about community colleges for 2009. Community colleges enrolled over 70% of the new students entering Texas higher education and were the institution of choice for a majority of students entering higher education. Additionally, community colleges enrolled 75% of the freshmen and sophomores in the state and 78% of minority freshmen and sophomores in the state. Finally, student populations reflected the ethnic diversity of the state, and they were accessible, affordable, and attracted the very students that were needed in the state's higher education system.

Community colleges are expected to educate a diverse mix of students with dramatically varying goals as well as serve students who may not have any other opportunity in higher education. Two thirds of jobs require a certificate or an associate's degree (TACC, 2009). Sustainable and successful community colleges are necessary to provide educational opportunities to students. In *Texas Challenge in the Twenty-First Century*, former state demographer Murdock (2006) identified three population trends for Texas: The state population will (a) show continuing and extensive growth, (b) have an increasingly diverse population, and (c) have an aging and age-stratified population. He concluded that unless socioeconomic and education differences among ethnic groups change, Texas will be poorer and less competitive in the future than it is today. Open enrollment often results in low student retention and in the loss of effort, time, and money for students and institutions. Retaining students is a chronic problem (Tinto, 2001).

Child Development Educators Association of Texas 2-year Colleges

The Child Development Educators Association (CDEA) is a professional organization for community college professors teaching Child Development and Early Childhood Education courses in Texas. There are 38 CDECE community college programs involved in this state group.

The organization provides information including syllabi, teaching tips, funding options, current legislation, and advocacy efforts on behalf of early childhood education. Networking opportunities, contact information for the CDECE College programs including websites, addresses, and so forth are made available to its members. Opportunities for collaboration are advanced through conferences, retreats, listservs, online discussions and web links to other programs and resources. This group was instrumental in developing coursework in the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM; found at <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/aar/undergraduateed/WorkforceEd>), which provides an inventory of current workforce education courses available for use by public 2-year colleges. WECM identifies the common early childhood course numbers, titles, descriptions, and student learning outcomes for the state.

This consortium of early childhood faculty from Texas community colleges meets twice a year. Members are representatives from rural, urban, and suburban community colleges with CDECE programs in Texas. At the February 2008 state meeting, program chairpersons and faculty were presented the results of the first study, “A Community College-University Partnership.”

Classification Systems for Community Colleges

The higher education literature implicitly assumes great homogeneity among community colleges in terms of state-assigned mission and functions, organizational complexity, finances, and students served (McCormick & Cox, 2003). The reality, however, is very different. Despite sharing a commitment to open access, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness to local needs, 2-year colleges in America are in fact quite diverse in terms of institutional control, geography, governance, and size (Katsinas, 1996).

The usefulness of classification is tied to whether or not it captures reality. Classifications help frame how we know what we know. Practitioners, researchers, and policymakers can benefit from an agreed classification scheme that provides institutional comparisons to assist in creating benchmarks to assess and improve educational practice. There are striking differences between rural, urban and suburban community colleges. A classification system should assist the broad research and public policy community to examine access and equity issues raised by such discrepancies in a world of increased passage in related programs that include welfare-to-work, and job training (McCormick & Cox, 2003).

In 1993, Kempner at the American Association of Community Colleges Symposium stated that, “we need an architecture that recognizes the diversity of institutions.” (p. 17). Katsinas (1993,1996; Katsinas & Lacey, 2003; Hardy & Katsinas, 2006) developed an inclusive, easily accessible methodology for practitioners, state and federal policymakers, and researchers using objective criteria to classify 2-year

institutions. The criteria included institutional control for public, private, and special-use or federally-chartered institutions. Further classification within the public sector is made on the basis of rural, suburban, or urban geography; in the public suburban and urban subcategories, the type of governance (multicampus or single campus); and in the public rural subcategory, enrollment size (large or small).

The classification system needed updating. The 2000 US Census and the 2000-2001 National Center for Education Statistics's Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System captured geographic population and enrollment profiles of the institutions being classified. Consolidated metropolitan statistical areas can be disaggregated to address geographies. Urban and suburban population areas, primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs) and metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) allowed each institution to be coded based upon the PMSA or MSA in which its physical address was located instead of using the consolidated-metropolitan-statistical-area designation. Using the more concentrated geographical areas represented by PMSAs and MSAs better capture the suburban sprawl that is a major demographic feature of the current US population development (Hardy & Katsinas, 2006). An institution was included in the urban/suburban group if it was situated within the boundaries of a PMSA or MSA with a population of 500,000 or more as reported in the 2000 US Census. All of those institutions in the PMSAs or MSAs with an aggregate population of fewer than 500,000, or that lie outside of any metropolitan statistical area were assigned to the rural class.

The classification system uses unduplicated annual credit headcount with enrollment ranges for the rural small, rural medium, and rural large subclasses of “under

2,500 annual unduplicated headcount, 2,500 to 7,500 annual unduplicated headcount, and over 7,500 annual unduplicated annual headcount,” (p. 343) respectively. It was determined to place a primary focus on accurately determining the number of campuses operated by all public institutions in the classification scheme in order to better organize and illustrate the public 2-year institutions and to facilitate 2-level data analysis and presentation in future research utilizing the classification system. Comparisons of the characteristics of the various classes and subclasses in the classification system are based upon the number of individual campuses in each property space as well as upon the number of consolidated institutions in each property space. Knowing how many campuses operate across the US is essential for this classification system.

The goal of the classification system was to capture the diversity of 2-year institutions across the US making it easier for researchers to draw representative survey samples and to make effective use of existing federal data sets. This system will assist in describing and discerning similarities and differences within the CD/ECE programs at community colleges in Texas.

Summary

The review of literature provides evidence regarding the issues of students enrolled in CDECE programs in Texas. In addition, research studies offer the knowledge bases to measure retention, transfer, articulation agreements, student populations, and student perceptions in general populations of students. Student fit within an institution is an intricate matter that depends on the student’s entering characteristics, the nature of the institution, the student’s experiences within the institution, and the student’s desired goals

and outcomes of college attendance (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Few studies have focused on students in CDECE programs in community colleges. Findings from this literature review suggest that research studies on CDECE programs are nonexistent. The researcher has a responsibility to inform the CDECE discipline as well as convert the research data analyses into social policy whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The classification system for community colleges will assist in identifying diversity in community colleges and the CDECE programs in Texas. Retention, transfer, articulation agreements, student populations, and student perceptions of institutions have often not taken these various factors into consideration. Wawrzynski and Sedlacek (2003) contend that because different factors may be involved when studying students, it is essential to choose the correct input, environmental, and outcome variables. Institutional leaders in particular, as well as administrators and those responsible for students, should have a better understanding of these factors and use such knowledge to develop both short-term and long-term strategies that would ensure the success of students whose goals are to remain in school, become employed in the workforce, transfer to another college or university, or reap the benefits of learning on any level.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study investigated the population of students enrolled in CDECE programs in community colleges in Texas. The study explores retention as related to student fit within an institution and argues that this is an intricate matter that depends on the student's characteristics, the nature of the college, the student's experiences within the college, and the student's desired goals and outcomes (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). This chapter describes the research design, population and sample selection, protection of human participants, instrumentation, method of data collection, and design of data analyses.

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive study examined the currently enrolled CDECE students' perceptions regarding their characteristics, experiences within the college, work sites and hours, college support services, and personal support systems, and the student's desired goals and outcomes. A cross-sectional approach was selected to include students at every stage of their community college education, whether they were beginning or completing degrees or certificates or obtaining training hours. An invitation was extended statewide to include urban, suburban, and rural community colleges in Texas. An online survey collected data in the beginning of the fall semester of 2009 from students enrolled in CDECE programs.

Procedures

Classification of Sites

The community colleges listed below belong to the 50 districts in the state of Texas. A community college classification model developed by Katsinas and Lacey (2003) was later redesigned and renamed as the 2005 Carnegie Classification System for 2-Year Colleges (Hardy & Katsinas, 2006). This system allows the researcher to identify the similarities and differences of student responses as compared by urban, suburban and rural community college districts. A list of the public community colleges with CD/ECE departments in Texas and their classifications is provided in Table 1. These eligible colleges included 28 rural, 10 urban, and 5 suburban districts.

Table 1

Child Development and Early Childhood Education Programs in Texas

Name of college	Location	Classification
Alvin Community College	Alvin	Rural, medium
Amarillo College	Amarillo	Rural, large
Angelina College	Lufkin	Rural, medium
Austin Community College	Austin	Urban, multicampus
Blinn College	Bryan	Rural, large
Brazosport College	Lake Jackson	Rural, medium
Brookhaven College	Dallas	Urban, multi campus
Central Texas College	Gainesville	Special use

Table 1 cont.

Name of college	Location	Classification
Coastal Bend College	Beeville	Rural, medium
College of the Mainland	Texas City	Rural, medium
Collin County Community College	Plano	Suburban, multicampus
Delmar College	Corpus Christi	Rural, large
Eastfield College	Mesquite	Urban, multicampus
El Paso Community College	El Paso	Urban, multicampus
Hill College	Hillsboro	Urban, multicampus
Houston Community College	Houston	Urban, multicampus
Howard College	San Angelo	Rural, medium
Kilgore College	Kilgore	Rural, medium
Lamar Institute of Technology	Beaumont	2-yr. college under 4-yr university
Lamar State College	Port Arthur	Rural, medium
Laredo Community College	Laredo	Rural, large
Lee College	Baytown	Suburban, multicampus
McLennan Community College	Waco	Rural, large
Midland College	Midland	Rural, large
North Central Texas College	Gainesville	Rural, medium
Odessa College	Odessa	Rural, medium

Table 1 cont.

Name of college	Location	Classification
San Antonio College	San Antonio	Urban, multicampus
San Jacinto College Central	Pasadena	Suburban, multicampus
San Jacinto College North	Houston	Urban, multicampus
South Plains College	Levelland	Rural, large
Southwest Texas Junior College	Uvalde	Rural, medium
St. Philip's College	San Antonio	Urban, multicampus
Tarrant County College	Ft. Worth	Urban, multicampus
Temple College	Temple	Rural, medium
Trinity Valley Community College	Athens	Suburban, multicampus
Tyler Junior College	Tyler	Rural, large
Wharton	Wharton	Rural, large

Participation Agreements

This study was introduced to the Chairpersons and faculty at the Texas Community College Teachers Association annual meeting in February 2008. The procedures were discussed and the chairpersons and faculty confirmed participation in the study by sending letters of agreement on their college letterhead stationery. A follow-up email message from the department chairpersons reported the number of students enrolled in each of their programs.

participate in the study. The sample of convenience included students who voluntarily accessed and completed the online survey.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed the Community College: All About Me survey to elicit specific information about the students enrolled in CDECE programs in Texas. The development was informed by a study conducted at Collin College (Moore, Wilkinson, Cunningham & Dako-Gyeke, 2007; Moore & Wilkinson, 2007), in addition to the work of Wawrznski (2003) at Michigan State and Townsend (1993, 2000, 2006) at the University of Missouri.

A previous study conducted at Collin County Community College was implemented as a needs assessment to identify concerns and college goals of Child Development and Early Childhood majors. The study entitled, “A Community College-University Partnership: Smoothing the Transition for Child Development and Early Childhood Education Students” included a detailed paper-and-pencil survey instrument and a series of focus groups. Wawrzinski’s Transfer Student Survey (1999) constituted one section of the survey instrument. The focus groups incorporated questions from Townsend’s research (1993) with students who transferred to a university. Additional sections of the questionnaire explored course schedules and course delivery, college support services, participation in college organizations, students’ work schedules, and advising.

A report of the findings was presented to the Child Development Educators Association at the annual meeting in February 2008. Although the study focused on one

community college, chairpersons from programs across the state recognized the potential value of the data to program planning. A revised version of the survey instrument deleted 10 items of the 29 and refined questions that had been institution specific. Permission was granted by Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski to adapt and use the remaining 19 items from the Transfer Student Survey (2003) for this study with community college students enrolled in CDECE.

An open-ended question was added to elicit issues identified in the focus groups. A panel of experts with 5 to 30 plus years of teaching experience in CDECE reviewed the survey and provided feedback. Suggestions were incorporated and the survey was converted to an online format.

The student survey, Community College: All About Me (Appendix A) includes the following sections:

1. Background information includes the name of the community college, the student's area of specialization or major, the number of credit hours obtained, and future plans of the participants for a total of nine items.
2. Preparedness and academic concerns included 19 items rated in a Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.
3. College goals and outcomes included eight items ranging from *very important* to *not at all important*.
4. Work-related questions include five items focused on place of employment, part-time, full-time, and weekly hours. The importance of work included seven items rated as the *major reason*, *minor reason*, or *not a reason*.

5. Coursework at community colleges included five items rated from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.
6. Community college support services and programs included 40 items rated by frequency of use and importance of services.
7. An open-ended question asked respondents about their concerns regarding completion of a degree or certificate. An item identifying contributions to success provides eight options plus a specification of *other*.
8. Demographics included age, marital status, living arrangements, racial/ethnic group, and formal education of parents for a total of six items.

Survey Access

The community college chairpersons and faculty members recruited students who participated in the online survey. The survey was introduced during orientation and/or class meetings. Incentives for student participation were determined by the chairpersons and faculty at each site and students were ensured that their participation was voluntary.

Students were given the link to the survey entitled, “Community College: All About Me” at the participating colleges. The respondents viewed a letter addressed, “Dear Student,” which explained the procedures for completing the survey. Students who completed the survey were given the option to print the last page of the survey to provide documentation to their professor(s) (Appendix B). No personal identification was submitted online.

The researcher monitored the response rates for the colleges. E-mail reminders (Appendix C) were sent to CDECE program chairpersons and phone call reminders

(Appendix D) were made to the program chairpersons whose students had not submitted online surveys. Data collection was conducted from September 1, 2009 to September 28, 2009.

Protection of Human Participants

The research study was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was electronically accessed by the respondents. The participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. The participants were informed that they could stop the survey or take a break any time they wanted or needed. No participant names were recorded. Confidentiality was ensured throughout the study. The open-ended question and responses that required a written statement from the survey were coded by the researcher and a graduate research assistant, thereby ensuring confidentiality throughout the duration of the study.

Plan for Data Analyses

Survey results in Psychdata were downloaded to Statistical Program for the Social Sciences 15.0 version for Windows (2006) to facilitate statistical analyses. Table 2 lists the research questions, the sections and items in the survey that relate to the questions, the descriptive data procedures, and the comparisons made among classifications of community colleges.

Table 2

Analyses of Data

Research question	Survey items	Descriptives	Classifications
1. What are students' personal characteristics?	Section I: item 1	Frequencies &	Cross tabulations
	Section IV: items 38-43 (work hours)	percentages	& Chi Square for nominal variables
			Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis
	Section V: items 44-50 (reasons for working)	Frequencies & percentages	Nonparametric for rank Kruskal-Wallis
	Section IX: items 98-103 (demographics/personal characteristics)	Frequencies & percentages of responses	Kruskal-Wallis, Chi Square

Table 2 cont.

Research question	Survey items	Descriptives	Classifications
2. What are students' goals?	Section I: Item 2 (degrees & certificates)	Frequencies & percentages	Cross tabulations & Chi Square
	Items 3,4 (courses & credit hours)	Frequencies & percentages	ANOVAS
	Items 5, 6, 7, 8 (future plans)	Frequencies & percentages	Cross tabulations & Chi Square
	Section III: items 30-37 (goals & outcomes)	Rank order by ratings	Kruskal-Wallis for 3 groups
3. What are students' concerns and perceptions of preparedness?	Section II: items 10-29 (concerns & preparedness)	Frequencies & percentages Rank order by ratings	Identify 5 highest factors Cronbach alpha
	Section VI: items 51-55 (courses)	Frequencies & percentages	
		Rank by rating Factor analysis to explore factors possible	Kruskal-Wallis & Chi square

Table 2 cont.

Research question	Survey items	Descriptives	Classifications
4. What are students' perceptions of college services and programs?	Section VII: items 56-95 (support services)	Frequencies & percentages Rank order ratings	Identify 5 highest
5. What are students' support systems?	Section VIII: item 97 (supports for success)	Frequencies & percentages	Cross tabulations & Chi Square

Summary

This chapter described the research design, procedures, and plan for analyses employed in this descriptive cross-sectional study. Procedures for selecting the research sites and the eligibility for participation were explained. The procedures of instrument development and implementation were described. A coder was trained to identify and categorize similar student responses in the survey questions that required students to write a response to the choice of *other* and to the open-ended question. Protection of human participants was addressed in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to describe students enrolled in CDECE community college programs in Texas in terms of personal characteristics, goals, concerns, and perceptions of preparedness, perceptions of college services and programs and support systems by use and importance. Students were asked to report the name of the community college attended, demographics, parents' educational background, degree, certificate, and course information as well as work hours, type of work, and future plans.

Description of Sample

Data were collected from students enrolled in 15 community colleges in Texas in September 2009. The public community colleges were classified as rural, urban, or suburban 2-year colleges by using the 2005 Carnegie 2-year Classification System. The population included a total of 5,761 students, based on reports from the program chairpersons at each participating college. Program chairpersons who agreed to participate in this study were requested to report spring 2009 child development enrollment numbers and gender proportion numbers to the researcher. Some of the chairpersons reported a duplicated count of students because students registered in more than one class. Therefore, the number of eligible students is an approximation of the total population.

A total of 1,047 students responded to the online survey, yielding an overall 17.7% return rate. Return rates from the colleges varied from a low of 1% to a high of 65%. Respondents were predominantly female, based on reported gender ratios. Table 3 displays details pertaining to the participating college programs. The percentages based on the number of responding students are illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows the distribution of students by geographic setting.

Table 3

Participating Child Development and Early Childhood Education Programs in Texas

College	Location	Classification	Enrollment	Gender Ratio	Sample
Alvin Community	Alvin	Rural	112	106 females 6 males	44
Amarillo College	Amarillo	Rural	210	210 females 0 males	2
Coastal Bend College	Beeville	Rural	102	100 females 2 males	9
Del Mar College	Corpus Christi	Rural	353	351 females 2 males	108
Grayson Community	Denison	Rural	160	157 females 3 males	104

Table 3 cont.

College	Location	Classification	Enrollment	Gender Ratio	Sample
Kilgore College	Kilgore	Rural	184	177 females 7 males	37
South Plains College	Levelland	Rural	79	76 females 3 males	15
Temple College	Temple	Rural	188	186 females 2 males	31
Austin Community	Austin	Urban	450	446 females 4 males	8
Eastfield College	Mesquite	Urban	1016 ^a	- females ^b 40 males	71
Houston Community	Houston	Urban	541	533 females 8 males	49
San Antonio College	San Antonio	Urban	354	339 females 15 males	108
Tarrant County	Ft. Worth	Urban	472	472 females 0 males	90
Collin College	Plano	Suburban	679 ^a	- females ^b 15 males	253

Table 3 cont.

College	Location	Classification	Enrollment	Gender Ratio	Sample
San Jacinto College	Pasadena	Suburban	861 ^a	- females ^b 43 males	118
TOTALS			5761		1047

^aThese values represent duplicated headcounts. Unduplicated values are not available.

^bUnduplicated female values are not available.

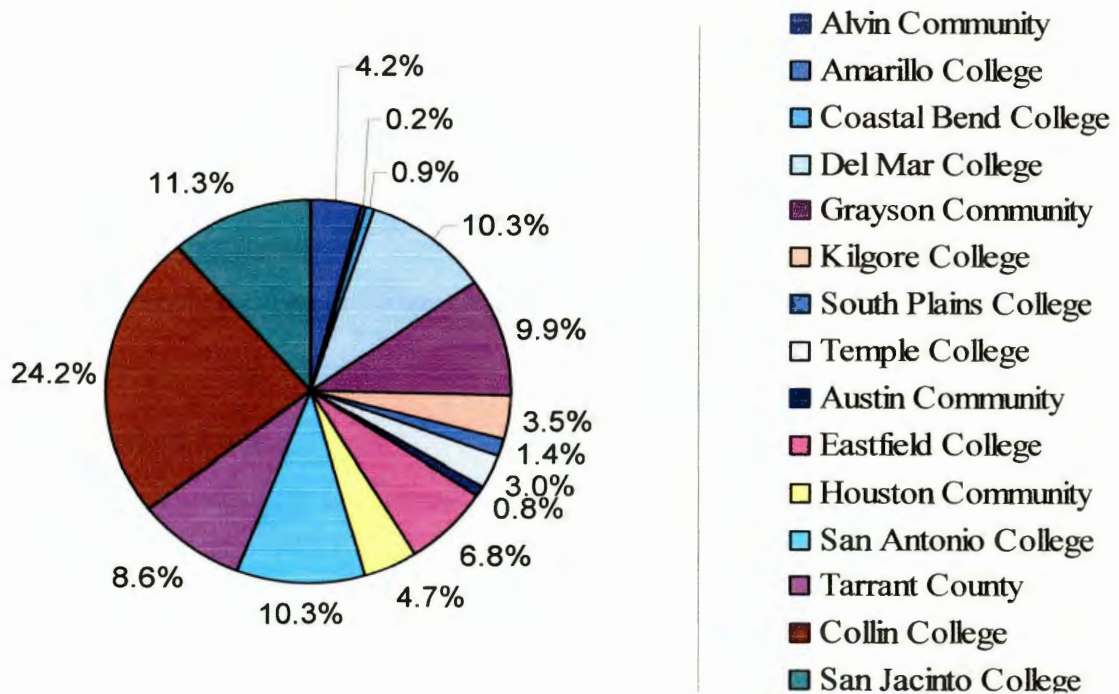


Figure 1. Participating programs.

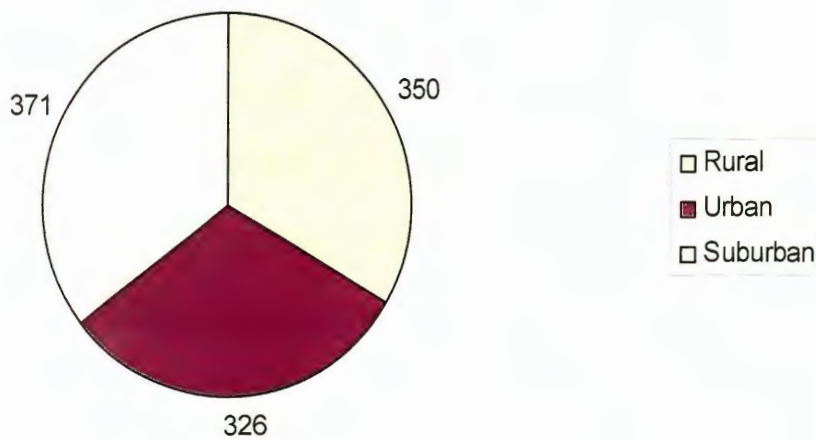


Figure 2. Rural, urban, and suburban population of students.

Figure 2 represents the number of students in Texas from rural, urban, and suburban community colleges who participated in the survey.

Research Question 1: What Are Students' Personal Characteristics?

Demographic Characteristics of Students

Section IX, items 98-100 elicited information about age, marital status, and living arrangements. Table 4 presents an overview of age and marital status in the sample.

Table 4

Age and Marital Status

Age	Single (<i>n</i> = 501)		Married, cohabiting (<i>n</i> = 412)		Separated, divorced, widowed (<i>n</i> = 91)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
18-20 years	229	45.7	26	6.3	1	1.1
21-25 years	175	34.9	82	19.9	12	13.2
26-35 years	71	14.2	139	33.7	25	27.5

Traditional college students in the 18-20 years and 21-25 years categories constituted 52.3% of the total sample who responded to these items. Therefore, the remaining 47.7% can be considered Nontraditional college students in terms of age.

Another approach to defining traditional/nontraditional college students considers marital status. Students in the sample who were single represented 49.9% of the total.

A definition that combines both age and marital status classifies single, younger students (less than 25 years) as traditional college students. Students in this group comprised 40.2% of the sample. The older students (26-35 years and 36-60+ years) and those who are *not* single comprised the remaining 59.8%.

Item 100 asked respondents to report their living arrangements as living with family or relatives (73.1%), living with a roommate (8.4%), or living alone (14.4%). The majority of CDECE students in community colleges across Texas were living with family or relatives.

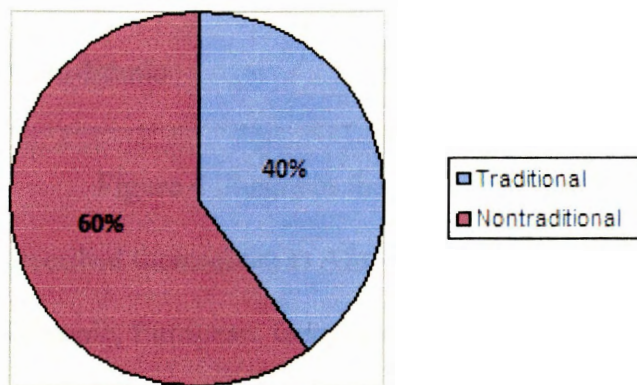


Figure 3. Percentages of traditional and nontraditional college students.

Item 101 requested identification of the students' racial/ethnic backgrounds. The frequencies and percentages are displayed in Table 5.

Figure 3. Percentages of traditional and nontraditional college students.

Item 101 requested identification of the students' racial/ethnic backgrounds. The frequencies and percentages are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Racial/Ethnic Identification

Race/ethnicity	<i>F</i>	%
African American	96	9.2
Asian/Asian	41	4.1
American/Pacific Islander		
White Caucasian	497	49.5
Hispanic	324	32.3
American Indian/Alaskan	7	0.7
Native		
Multi-Ethnic	39	3.9

Figure 4 illustrates the race/ethnicity of the sample. The Multi-Ethnic group described themselves as Afro-Latina and Arabic, Black and Caucasian, Caucasian and Hispanic, European, German and Spanish, German and French, German and Irish, Guyanese, Romanian, Hispanic and Native American, Jamaican, Kurdish, Mideastern, Persian, Swedish and Filipino, and Caucasian and Asian.

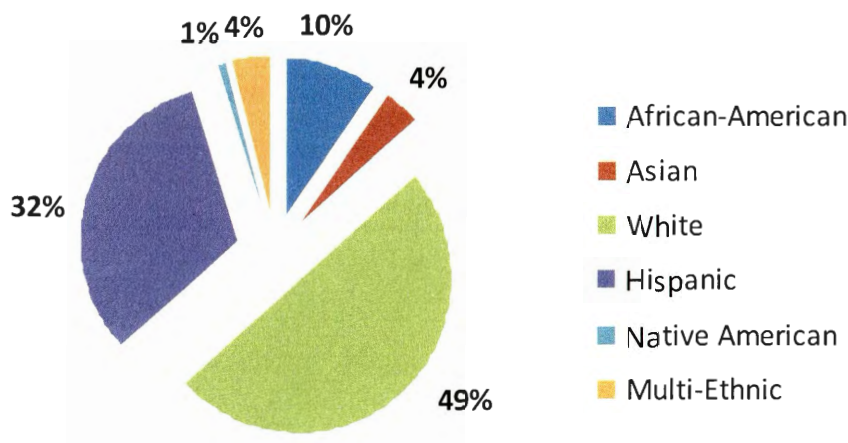


Figure 4. Race/ethnicity identification.

Students and Work

Section IV, items 38-41 requested information of students about employment. Respondents reported that 24.2% were working in childcare, 18.8% were working with children, and 57% were working in other jobs. Among the other jobs listed were accounting, at-home parent or full-time parent, babysitter, bank industry worker, beautician, retail, cashier in various industries, fast food restaurant, clerical work, customer service representative, dental assistant, doctor's office assistant, hospital staff, full-time student, grocery store, volunteer work, and the health care industry. Many of the students indicated that they were unemployed or laid off from work, and others reported that they were international students with visas and could not work.

Cross tabulations compared work status by classifications, producing a chi square value of 1.53 ($p = 0.82$) with ($df = 2$). Therefore, the work patterns were similar among rural, urban and suburban colleges.

Table 6

Student Employment

	Rural (<i>n</i> = 222)		Urban (<i>n</i> = 382)		Suburban (<i>n</i> = 320)	
Work status	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Working in child care	54	24.3	89	23.3	81	25.3
Working with children	41	18.5	68	17.8	65	20.3
Other jobs not related to working with children	127	57.2	225	58.9	174	54.4

Questions related to on-campus and off-campus employment were answered by 1,032 of the students. Only 67 students reported that they worked on their campuses, whereas 688 students reported employment in off-campus jobs. Of those who worked on campus, the most frequently checked work schedule was 1-9 hours per week. Of students who worked in off-campus jobs, 18% worked less than 20 hours per week, whereas 82% reported working 20 to 40 or more hours weekly. Figure 5 illustrates the percentages of students who work full time and part time off-campus.

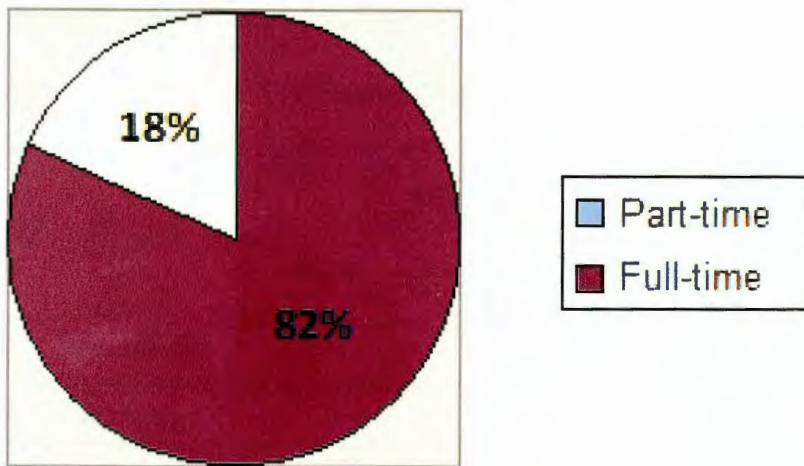


Figure 5. Students' full-time and part-time off-campus work.

Section V, items 44-50 focused on the importance of reasons for working while enrolled in college. Each item was rated as a *major reason*, a *minor reason*, or *not a reason* for me. For the analysis, the major reasons were ranked using the frequencies and percentages of responses. Table 7 provides the rankings of the reasons for working by classification.

Kruskal-Wallis tests compared the students' ratings of reasons for working for each item by classification. Rural, urban, and suburban students differed significantly on one of seven reasons for working. A chi square value of 10.49 produced a probability of 0.005 ($df = 2$) for the item Personal or Family Obligations.

Table 7

Major Reasons for Working by Classifications

Reasons for working	Rural			Urban			Suburban		
	Rank	(n = 346)		Rank	(n = 316)		Rank	(n = 367)	
		f	%		f	%		f	%
Take care of personal or family obligation	1	271	78	1	252	78	1	258	70
Gain job experience related to anticipated major	2	213	62	2	205	65	2	237	65
Help pay for college education	3	196	56	3	192	59	3	228	61
Earn extra spending money	4	197	57	6	162	50	5	205	55
Gain general job experience	5	185	53	4	186	57	4	209	57
Career exploration	7	152	44	7	153	47	7	159	43
Career networking	6	139	40	5	168	52	6	164	44

Parents' Education

Section IX items 102 and 103 requested the highest levels of education attained by the students' parents. The choices included *elementary school or less, some high school, high school graduate, postsecondary school other than college, some college, college degree, some graduate school, and graduate degree*. The full range of educational levels was reported for both mothers and fathers of the student respondents. To create groups with enough power for data analysis, the levels were combined to create two categories of *high school graduate or less* and *postsecondary school other than college and more*. The frequencies and percentages for mothers and fathers are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Parents' Education by Classifications

	Rural				Urban				Suburban			
	Mother		Father		Mother		Father		Mother		Father	
	(n=317)		(n=334)		(n=273)		(n=294)		(n=340)		(n=350)	
Education	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
High school or less	168	53	185	55	153	56	174	59	145	43	155	44
Postsec or more	149	47	149	45	120	44	120	41	195	57	195	56

Kruskal-Wallis tests compared mothers' education and fathers' education by classifications. Parents' levels of education, reported by students, varied significantly by rural, urban and suburban settings. The chi square value for mothers' education was 13.64 ($p = 0.001$, $df = 2$) and the chi square value for fathers' education was 11.50 ($p = 0.003$, $df = 2$) with degrees of freedom. Parents of suburban students evidenced the highest levels of education.

Summary of Research Question 1

Research Question 1 explored students' personal characteristics. Results indicated that students at community colleges enrolled in CDECE programs were predominately nontraditional females who cared for families and worked full-time off-campus while attending college. The majority of students were the first in their immediate families to enroll in college, based on reports of parents' education.

Research Question 2: What Are Students' Goals?

Degrees or Certificates Sought at Community Colleges

Section I, item 2 requested students to select which degree or certificate they sought at their community college. The Associate of Applied Science Degree in Child Development and the Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree were offered at all Texas community colleges with CDECE programs. The frequencies and percentages are displayed in Table 9 for the Associate Degrees by classifications. Additional choices included a Child Development Certificate, a Child Development Associate Credential, and an Early Childhood Specialization. However, certificate and specialization offerings varied from campuses. Students who checked *other* included Associate in Business

Studies, Associate of Nursing, Associate of Liberal Arts, Associate of Art Education, Associate of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Basic classes that will transfer, Continuing Education Training, Criminal Justice, Deaf Education, Engineering, Family Advocate, I am not getting a degree, Interdisciplinary Studies, or No degree, transferring to a 4-year university.

Table 9

Associate Degrees Sought by Students by Classifications

Degrees	Rural ($n = 349$)		Urban ($n = 325$)		Suburban ($n = 373$)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Associate of applied science	54	16	94	29	57	15
Associate of arts in teaching	169	49	117	36	164	44
Certificates, specializations, and other	119	35	110	34	148	40

Cross-tabulations were calculated to compare degrees sought by classifications.

There were significant differences among the patterns of responses from rural, urban, and suburban students (chi square = 20.83, $p = 0.000$, $df = 4$).

College Status

Section I items 3 and 4 asked students to list the number of courses in which they were currently enrolled and the total number of credit hours completed. The means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 10. The number of courses ranged from 1 to 6, whereas the number of credit hours ranged from 0 (those in their first semester) to 99.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations of Current Courses and Credits Completed by

Classifications

College Status	Rural ($n = 349$)		Urban ($n = 321$)		Suburban ($n = 372$)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Courses	3.60	1.23	3.23	1.28	3.30	1.40
Credits	30.29	24.51	38.30	24.74	34.79	25.91

Analysis of variance tests compared the courses and credits by classifications. The groups did not differ significantly. Across the three settings, students were currently enrolled in three to four courses and had completed approximately half of a degree plan consisting of 60-62 credit hours.

Future Plans

Section I, item 7 focused on the highest academic degree students intended to obtain. Only 12.3% of the students reported that they planned to complete their education at the Associate's degree level. A Bachelor's degree was anticipated by 41.5% of the students

and a Master's degree by an additional 32.2%. More advanced professional degrees were anticipated by 7.4% of the students.

Item 5 asked, "Where do you see yourself working in the next five years?" A selection menu included employment options. The frequencies and percentages are displayed in Table 11 for rural, urban, and suburban students.

Table 11

Future Plans for Employment by Classifications

Employment	Rural ($n = 349$)		Urban ($n = 325$)		Suburban ($n = 373$)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Public school- prek/elementary	220	63	191	59	209	56
Public school- middle or high school	45	13	14	4	39	10
Child care program (private/public)	57	16	89	27	81	22
Other	27	8	31	10	44	12

Cross tabulations produced a chi square of 28.06 ($p = 0.001$, $df = 6$) indicating that the patterns varied significantly. The majority of students anticipated employment in public schools at the PreK-Elementary School level.

Item 6 asked if students were planning to transfer to a university. The responses were *yes* or *no*. A pie chart in Figure 6 illustrates the results.

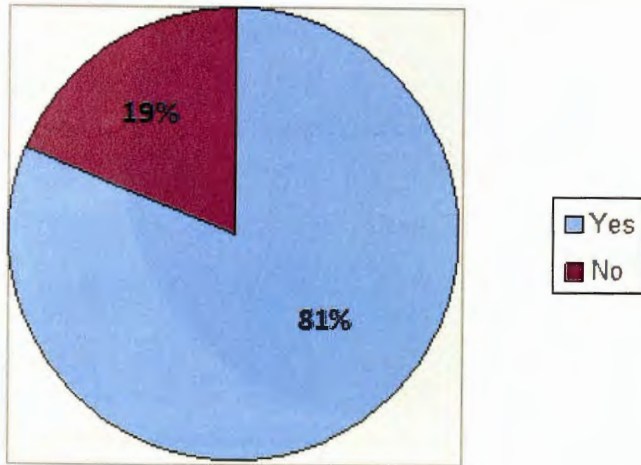


Figure 6. Students planning to transfer.

Item 8 requested that students identify the major consideration in decision making for transferring. Only one of the eight choices could be selected. Based on the responses, 26% selected “offers kind of program that I want.” The additional considerations, in order of selection, were “relatively inexpensive” (18.1%), “availability of financial aid” (17%), “geographical location” (14.9%), “reputation of the program/school” (10%), “recommendation of family/friends” (8.1%), “other” (4.8%), and “size of institution” (1.1%). A pie chart in Figure 7 illustrates the percentages of selected considerations.

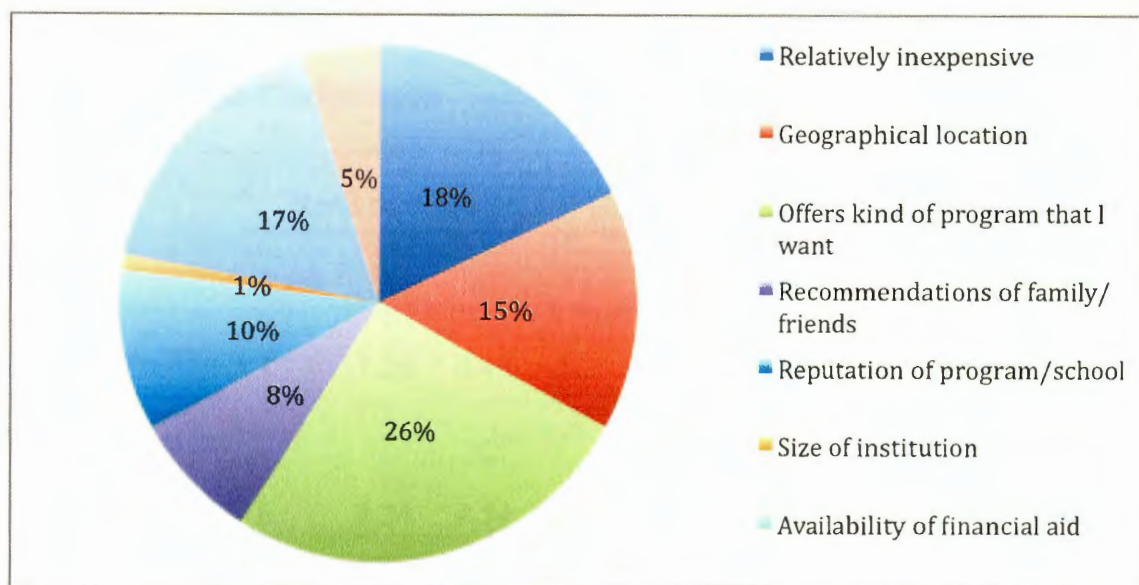


Figure 7. Major considerations in decision-making to transfer.

College Goals and Outcomes

In Section III, items 30-37, students rated the importance of college of goals and outcomes as *very important* (1), *important* (2), *undecided* (3), *not too important* (4), or *not at all important* (5). Lower scores for items indicated a rating of greater importance. The mean ratings and standard deviations were used to rank order the student's goals and outcomes. Table 12 displays the rank ordering of the students' goals by classifications.

Kruskal-Wallis tests compared students' ratings of each goal by classifications. Significant differences were found for Acquiring Technology Skills for Work and Life (chi square = 8.61, $p = 0.01$, $df = 2$), Acquiring Knowledge in Areas that Complement/Enhance My Academic Interest Area (chi square = 7.13, $p = 0.28$, $df = 2$), and Developing Leadership Skills (chi square = 9.15, $p = 0.10$, $df = 2$).

Table 12

Students' Goals by Classifications

Goals	Rural (<i>n</i> = 346)			Urban (<i>n</i> = 318)			Suburban (<i>n</i> = 367)		
	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Oral communication	1	1.24	0.45	1	1.19	0.44	2	1.26	0.48
Written communication	6	1.34	0.54	4	1.26	0.47	3	1.34	0.52
Technology	7	1.38	0.57	7	1.30	.051	7	1.42	0.57
Knowledge and skills in my academic area	2	1.24	0.47	2	1.20	0.43	1	1.24	0.43
Knowledge in areas that enhance my area	4	1.34	0.51	3	1.26	0.47	4	1.36	0.51
Community service	8	1.89	0.86	8	1.84	0.87	8	1.91	0.79
Think and reason	3	1.30	0.50	5	1.28	0.47	5	1.37	0.55
Leadership skills	5	1.31	0.54	6	1.29	0.52	6	1.41	0.60

Summary of Research Question 2

Students were currently enrolled in 3-4 courses and had completed more than half of their associate degree programs. The most popular choice of degrees was the A.A.T. which will provide the foundation for teacher certification at the Bachelor's level. A majority of students (81%) planned to transfer to a university and most anticipated working at a public elementary school in the future. The most important college goals/outcomes were Learning to Communicate Effectively Orally and Acquiring Knowledge and Skills in My Academic Interest Area.

Research Question 3: What are students' concerns and perceptions of preparedness?

Research Question 3: Student Concerns and Perceptions of Preparedness

Section II, items 10-29 were adapted from the Transfer Student Survey (Wawzrynski, 1999) which originally included 30 items. The current version asked students to assess their preparedness for college work, their concerns, and interests. Reliability of the revised version was calculated using inter-item correlations. The standardized Cronbach alpha value was 0.49, indicating a less than acceptable reliability. Options included *strongly agree* (1), *agree* (2), *neutral* (3) or *disagree* (4) and *strongly disagree* (5). The lower values indicated stronger endorsement of the statements. The means and standard deviations for items were used to rank order the five statements most strongly endorsed by students. These statements included the following: (a) Item 28: "I am concerned about the academic requirements outside my major." (b) Item 23: "I would be interested in working with a faculty member on a research project." (c) Item 27: "I am interested in interacting with faculty outside of class." (d) Item 26: "I am interested in

joining campus organizations.” and (e) Item 22: “I am concerned about the transferability of my courses completed at other institutions.” The rankings are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Concerns, Preparedness, and Interests by Classifications

	Rural (<i>n</i> = 348)			Urban (<i>n</i> = 320)			Suburban (<i>n</i> = 369)		
	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Requirements outside major	1	0.11	0.31	1	0.13	0.34	1	0.13	0.34
Work w/ faculty	2	0.11	0.32	4	0.22	0.41	4	0.18	0.39
Interact w/ faculty	3	0.12	0.32	2	0.17	0.38	2	0.14	0.35
Campus organizations	4	0.14	0.35	3	0.19	0.40	3	0.15	0.36
Transfer	5	0.20	0.40	5	0.25	0.43	5	0.22	0.41

Kruskal-Wallis tests were calculated for the five selected statements to compare by classifications. Students’ ratings did not differ significantly, except item 23, working with faculty on research. The chi square was 13.16 with a probability of 0.001 (*df* = 2).

Section VI, items 51-55 elicited students’ preferences about courses. Ratings ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, with scoring from 1 to 5. Lower values

indicated stronger endorsements of the statements. The items in Table 14 were rank ordered by the means and standard deviations.

Table 14

Course Preferences by Classifications

Preferences	Rural (<i>n</i> = 343)			Urban (<i>n</i> = 314)			Suburban (<i>n</i> = 366)		
	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I should be allowed to transfer all courses from a community college to a university	1	1.33	0.68	1	1.31	0.63	1	1.34	0.68
Courses I took at community college are related to courses I will be taking at a university	2	1.50	0.73	2	1.46	0.68	2	1.53	0.78
I would prefer taking courses at a community college before enrolling in courses at a university	3	1.57	0.84	3	1.52	0.84	3	1.59	0.90
I would prefer completing my coursework at a community college before considering courses at a university	4	1.67	0.92	4	1.58	0.90	4	1.62	0.89

Table 14 cont.

Preferences	Rural (<i>n</i> = 343)			Urban (<i>n</i> = 314)			Suburban (<i>n</i> = 366)		
	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I would prefer for my professors from a university to teach higher level courses on my community college campus before I transfer	5	2.12	1.02	5	1.99	0.99	5	2.00	0.97

Student ratings of agreement for course preferences were compared by classifications using Kruksal-Wallis tests for each statement. The results were nonsignificant, indicating that the ratings were similar across rural, urban, and suburban settings.

Summary of Research Question 3

Students strongly agreed that they were concerned about academic requirements outside of their majors. Students in rural colleges ranked working with a faculty member higher than those students in urban and suburban colleges. Rural, urban, and suburban students strongly agreed that their courses should be allowed to transfer from a community college to a university.

them as well as how frequently the services and programs were used. Frequency was rated as *weekly* (1), *monthly* (2), *occasionally* (3), and *never* (4). Lower values indicated more frequent use. Importance was rated as *very important* (1), *somewhat important* (2), and *not important* (3). Lower values indicated greater importance. Reliability for this section of the questionnaire was based on inter-item correlations, producing a standardized Cronbach's alphas of 0.957. This indicated excellent reliability for this section. The services and programs were ranked for each classification based on the means and standard deviations of the items. The five most frequently used services and the five most important services are listed in Table 15.

Comparisons among rural, urban, and suburban students were calculated with Kruskal-Wallis tests. The ratings for frequency of use differed significantly only for vending machines. The chi square value was 41.61 with a probability of 0.000 and degrees of freedom of 2. Rural students tended to use vending machines more often than students in urban or suburban colleges. The ratings for importance differed significantly by classification for financial aid (chi square = 20.98, $p = 0.000$, $df = 2$). Although financial aid was ranked first and second for rural and urban students, it did not rank in the top five services for suburban students. The importance of College Email differed by classification (chi square = 14.08, $p = 0.001$, $df = 2$). Rural students did not rank it among the top five services. College Bookstore also differed significantly in Importance by classification (chi square = 13.35, $p = 0.001$, $df = 2$). It ranked first among urban students and second among suburban students, but was not ranked in the top five by rural students.

Table 15

College Services and Programs by Classifications

Services	Rural (<i>n</i> = 238)			Urban (<i>n</i> = 405)			Suburb (<i>n</i> = 359)		
	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<u>Frequency of use</u>									
College Email	1	2.14	1.21	1	1.92	1.20			
Vending Machines	2	2.18	1.10	5	2.73	1.10	5	2.70	1.09
Library	3	2.25	1.11	2	2.39	1.08	1	2.24	1.04
Computer Labs	4	2.26	1.22	3	2.39	1.25	2	2.43	1.18
Printing	5	2.59	1.24				4	2.60	1.16
Bookstore				4	2.66	0.67	3	2.59	0.77
<u>Importance of services</u>									
Financial Aid	1	1.29	0.85	2	1.29	0.59			
Library	2	1.32	0.56	3	1.35	0.60	1	1.29	0.50
Scholarship	3	1.38	0.67						
Computer Labs	4	1.40	0.64						
Academic	5	1.43	0.63	5	1.43	0.64	3	1.43	0.59
Advising									
Bookstore				1	1.26	0.51	2	1.41	0.57
College Email				4	1.37	0.67	4	1.49	0.67
College Police							5	1.49	0.73

Summary of Research Question 4

College libraries and computer labs, based on the ratings, were used “weekly” to “monthly” by students in all colleges. Libraries and academic advising were “very important,” based on the ratings by students in rural, urban, and suburban colleges.

Research Question 5: What Are Students’ Support Systems?

Section VIII, item 97 requested students to select all applicable responses from a list of possible contributors. Each statement was checked or not checked. Based on the number of students who checked each response, the list was ranked ordered by frequencies and percentages. The results are displayed in Table 16 by rural, urban, and suburban colleges.

Crosstabs were calculated to compare the list of contributors by rural, urban, and suburban colleges. Significant differences were found for three of the seven statements. The chi square value for “professors are experienced and knowledgeable” was 18.44, with $p = 0.000$ and $df = 2$. Having “a child development lab school on campus” produced a chi square value of 14.84, with $p = 0.001$ and $df = 2$. “Seeking advice from faculty” resulted in a chi square value of 8.62, with $p = 0.013$ and $df = 2$. The patterns of responses were not significantly different for the remaining statements.

Table 16

Supports by Classifications

Preferences	Rural (<i>n</i> = 343)			Urban (<i>n</i> = 299)			Suburban (<i>n</i> = 362)		
	Rank	<i>f</i>	%	Rank	<i>f</i>	%	Rank	<i>f</i>	%
Family support	1	261	76.1	1	232	77.6	1	255	70.4
Professors are experienced and knowledgeable	2	183	53.4	2	186	62.2	2	250	69.1
Seeking advice from classmates and former students	3	157	45.8	4	144	48.2	3	156	43.1
Seeking advice from faculty	4	116	33.8	3	135	45.2	4	143	39.5
Support from colleagues at work	5	96	28.0	6	96	32.1	5	108	29.8
Support from supervisor at work	6	77	22.4	7	80	26.8	7	82	22.7
A Child Development Lab School on Campus	7	72	21.0	5	103	34.4	6	95	26.2

Section VIII, item 96 requested students to write concerns they had regarding completion of an Associate's Degree or Certificate. There were 1047 students (100%) who responded to this open-ended question. The most frequent responses ($n = 151$) were students' remarks about transfer credits to another college. The following are examples of students' comments.

- "I'm most concerned about all of my courses transferring without a problem, since I've heard that people have had problems in transferring."
- "Availability of transfer courses."
- "Having everything transfer to a university will be difficult."
- "Doing well in all coursework related to my area of study and having those classes transfer to a university."

Students expressed their concerns about academic skills and their abilities to succeed ($n = 100$). The following examples were some of the most common.

- "Being able to have sufficient writing skills to satisfy my professors' requirements."
- "Being able to pass all the classes that are required because some are very hard to pass."
- "Being able to pass the math requirement."
- "If I will be able to pass my courses when I get a teacher who is not teaching me in a way I can understand and fear the possibility of losing my financial aid."

- “Just getting through it, especially math. YUK.”
- “Mostly just the academic requirements being met with the personal conflicts and schedule conflicts I have.”

A total of 178 students relayed that they had no concerns. Typical comments included the following.

- “I don’t have any concerns. I’m just ready for this first hurdle to be over so I can begin the next.”
- “I don’t have any, I am on schedule.”
- “I don’t have any concerns right now. I just want to do my very best in all my classes.”
- “I don’t have any concerns. The teachers have helped a lot during the semester. It has been really helpful to talk to them.”
- “I don’t have any concerns regarding completing my teaching certificate. I just hope it’s widely accepted.”
- “I don’t have any concerns, I’m confident that I am going to be okay.”

Other responses elicited from students concerned the balancing of school, work, job and family ($n = 119$). The following were some of the students’ comments.

- “Having time because I work full-time, am married and have 3 young children.”
- “I am a single parent trying to work full time and work on getting my degree.”
- “Getting burned out because I put too much on my plate.”

- “Having enough time to balance personal life as well as school work and work.”
- “Conflict between work and school.”
- “Being able to manage my time with being a full time mom, working full time, while also attending school full time.”
- “Being able to juggle full time job, college, and family.”

Finances concerned 102 students. The following are quotations.

- “Financial issues and implementing the time to study since I work full time.”
- “Financial aid and having time from work.”
- “Getting the money to finance my schooling when I get ready to transfer over to the four year college of my choice.”
- “Financial difficulties and the cost of living.”
- “I am a husband and a parent who has concerns of running out of funding, putting more emphasis on school than my family, and not being able to complete my degree because of the necessity to work.”
- “I am concerned about being able to continue classes financially when you add the cost of tuition and books. It is very expensive.”
- “I can do the work if I can afford it and I have adequate time for classes and homework. A lot more people with families and jobs would go back if they were financially able.”
- “I do worry about the financial struggle I am in.”

Students responded about their concerns for finding a job after completing their degrees ($n = 106$). The following were some of the most typical remarks.

- “I am ultimately concerned about whether I will be considered for employment in the education field with only a certificate. However, if I chose to attend a university...the tuition is very expensive for me as I don’t qualify for scholarships or grants.”
- “I feel that my associates degree I obtained is just a piece of paper. In reality, you need a bachelors degree no matter what.”
- “I know in order to possibly get a good paying job, you need an Associates.”
- “I know many who have graduated with an associates degree were hired at their place of employment along with others who have simply a high school degree. However, I am aware that one’s employment varies upon the knowledge and experience presented.”
- “I wonder sometimes if it will be good enough.”
- “If I will be able to get a job!”

Students reported their concerns and challenges being nontraditional students ($n = 52$) and about course availability ($n = 29$), degree plans ($n = 66$), course schedules ($n = 13$), length of time for completion of degrees or certificates ($n = 86$), motivation to continue school and work ($n = 8$), and degree obtainment ($n = 37$).

Summary of Research Question 5

Family Support was checked most frequently by students in rural, urban, and suburban colleges followed by “professors are experienced and knowledgeable.” The

rural and suburban students rated “seeking advice from classmates and former students,” “seeking advice from faculty,” and “support from colleagues at work” in the same order. Urban and suburban students had similar ratings for “support from supervisor at work.” Significant differences were found in “professors are experienced and knowledgeable,” “child development lab school on campus,” and “seeking advice from faculty.”

The open-ended question elicited student concerns regarding completing an Associate’s Degree or Certificate in Texas community colleges. Concerns included finding a job; balancing school, home, and work; completing academic skills; financing education and home; transferring credits to universities; being a nontraditional student; obtaining a degree; scheduling and finding courses that fit into their life; writing a degree plan; and having no concerns.

Table 17 below lists the results of the research questions, the sections and items in the survey that relate to the questions, the results of the data procedures, and the comparisons made among classifications of community colleges.

Table 17

Results of Data Analyses

Research questions	Survey items	Comparisons by classifications		
		Rural (n = 350)	Urban (n = 326)	Suburban (n = 371)
RQ1. What are students' personal characteristics?	Section I: item 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Current Work Types: 24.2% working in childcare, 18.8% working with children, 57% working in other jobs, unemployed or international students who could not work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross tabulations were nonsignificant ▪ Work patterns were similar ➤ Work Hours: 18% worked less than 20 hours per week (part-time), 82% worked 20-40 or more hours per week (full-time) 		
	Section IV: items 38-43			
	Section V: items 44-50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reasons for Working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Top ranked were Personal or Family Obligations (1) and Gain Job Experience Related to Major (2) ▪ Significant Kruskal-Wallis tests ▪ Rural and urban percentages > suburban for Personal or Family Obligations ▪ Urban percentages > suburban and rural for Career Networking 		

Table 17 cont.

Research questions	Survey items	Comparisons by classifications		
		Rural (n = 350)	Urban (n = 326)	Suburban (n = 371)
	Section IX: items 98-99	➤ Traditional/Nontraditional Students: 40.2%		
	Item 100	Traditional = less than 25 years and single; 59.8%		
	Item 101	Nontraditional = 26-60+ years and <u>not</u> single		
		➤ 73.1% live with family or relatives		
	Items 102-103	➤ Race/Ethnicity: 49% White, 32% Hispanic, 10% African American, 4% Asian, 4% Multi-Ethnic, 1% Native American		
		➤ Parents' Education		
		▪ Significant Kruskal-Wallis tests		
		▪ Parents of suburban students percentages > rural and urban		
RQ2. What are students' goals?	Section I: item 2	➤ Degrees Sought		
		▪ Significant cross-tabulations		
		▪ AAT percentages > Certificates and AAS		
	Items 3, 4	➤ College Status: 3-4 courses, 30-38 credit hours		
		▪ Nonsignificant ANOVAs		
		▪ Means were similar		

Table 17 cont.

		Comparisons by classifications		
Research questions	Survey items	Rural (n = 350)	Urban (n = 326)	Suburban (n = 371)
	Item 7	➤ Highest Intended Degree		
		▪ 12.3% AAS, 41.5% Bachelors, 32.2%		
	Item 5	Masters, and 7.4% more advanced professional degrees		
	Item 6	➤ Future Employment		
		▪ Significant cross tabulations		
	Item 8	▪ PreK-Elementary School percentages > child care and middle/high school		
		➤ Transfers		
		▪ 81% of students plan to transfer, 19% do not		
		▪ Nonsignificant cross tabulations		
		▪ Percentages of students were similar		
		➤ Major Considerations for Transferring: 26%		
		“offers kind of program I want,” 18.1%		
		“relatively inexpensive,” 17% “availability of financial aid,” 14.9% “geographical location,” 10% “reputation of the program/school,” 8.1% “recommendation of family/friends,” 1.1% “size of institution,” 4.8% “other”		

Table 17 cont.

Research questions	Survey items	Comparisons by classifications		
		Rural (n = 350)	Urban (n = 326)	Suburban (n = 371)
	Section III: items 30-37	➤ Students' Goals		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Top ranked were Oral Communication (1) and Knowledge and Skills in My Academic Area (2) ▪ Significant Kruskal-Wallis tests ▪ Importance of Developing Leadership Skills: urban and rural > suburban ▪ Importance of Technology Skills: urban > rural and suburban ▪ Importance of Knowledge in Areas that Enhance My Academic Area: urban > rural and suburban 		
RQ3. What are students' concerns and perceptions of preparedness?	Section II: items 10-29	➤ Concerns, Preparedness, and Interests		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Top endorsed statements were Requirements outside my major (1), Work with faculty (2), Interact with faculty (3), Campus Organizations (4), and Transfer (5) ▪ Significant Kruskal-Wallis test ▪ Importance of Work with Faculty: rural > suburban and urban 		

Table 17 cont.

Research questions	Survey items	Comparisons by classifications		
		Rural (n = 350)	Urban (n = 326)	Suburban (n = 371)
	Section VI: items 51-55	<p>➤ Course Preferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Top ranked were Transfer All Courses (1) and Courses at CC related to University (2) ▪ Nonsignificant Kruskal-Wallis tests ▪ Ratings were similar 		
RQ4. What are students' perceptions of college services and programs?	Section VII: items 56-95	<p>➤ College Services and Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most frequently used were Libraries (1) and Computer Labs (2) ▪ Significant Kruskal-Wallis tests ▪ Frequency of use for Vending Machines: rural > urban and suburban ▪ Most important were Libraries (1) and Academic Advising (2) ▪ Significant Kruskal-Wallis tests ▪ Importance for Financial Aid: rural and urban > suburban ▪ Importance of College Email: urban and suburban > rural ▪ Importance of Bookstore: urban and suburban > rural 		

Table 17 cont.

Research questions	Survey items	Comparisons by classifications		
		Rural (n = 350)	Urban (n = 326)	Suburban (n = 371)
RQ5. What are students' support systems?	Section VIII: item 97	➤ Supports		
		▪ Top preferences were Family Support (1) and Professors Are Experienced and Knowledgeable (2)		
		▪ Significant cross tabulations		
		▪ Professors Are Experienced: suburban > urban > rural		
		▪ Child Development Lab: urban > suburban and rural		
		▪ Seeking Advice From Faculty: urban > suburban and rural		

Summary

This chapter presented demographic descriptors of students ($n = 1047$) enrolled in CDECE programs in Texas community colleges and who participated in the study. Their goals, concerns, and perceptions of preparedness for coursework, college services and programs, and academic and personal support systems were examined to gain more knowledge about this population of students in rural, urban, and suburban settings. Their parents' educational background illustrated that students were first-generation college bound and sought a degree or certificate. An examination of student work hours and type

managed a family, and still planned to complete college. The students' future plans focused on working in childcare and public schools. Other students planned to continue their education after a bachelor's degree. The results provided a distinct picture of the rural, urban, and suburban students enrolled in Texas community colleges.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The question “Who are CDECE students in Texas Community Colleges?” was a catalyst for this study. Ultimately, the study looked at the needs of the CD/ECE students and how they could be supported to meet their goals and complete their degrees successfully. Therefore, the need to conduct targeted research to determine the important factors for the program and its students’ success reflected by retention, degree completion, and transition to work or transfer to a university became the purpose of this study.

This study employed the 2005 Carnegie 2-year Classification System (Katsinas & Lacey, 2003). This system classified 2-year colleges into rural, urban, and suburban colleges. Students were grouped by the classification system to determine whether there were similarities or differences based on their college settings.

The study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are students’ personal characteristics?
2. What are students’ goals?
3. What are students’ concerns and perceptions of preparedness?
4. What are students’ perceptions of college services and programs?
5. What are students’ support systems?

A cross-sectional descriptive study examined the currently enrolled CDECE students' perceptions regarding their characteristics, experiences within the college, work sites and hours, college support services and personal support systems, and desired goals and outcomes. A cross-sectional approach was selected to include students at every stage of their community college education, whether they were beginning or completing degrees or certificates or obtaining training hours.

A survey research methodology was used to collect data for the study. The survey instrument included a set of Likert-type statements, drop-down menus of choices, and open-ended questions addressing students' preparedness, concerns and interests, college goals and outcomes, reasons for working while in college, courses, college support services and programs, contributions to success selections, and demographic questions.

Based on the figures obtained from the program chairpersons and faculty, the estimated population of CDECE students in the 15 participating Texas community colleges was 5,761. Of those, 1,047 students participated in the online survey. The overall survey return rate was 18%.

This chapter discusses the findings from this study and compares results with those of previous studies. The studies were examined in the literature review and served as a pivotal point for the current study of CDECE students in rural, urban, and suburban community colleges.

Discussion of Findings

Research conducted for this study answered the main research questions, which are discussed below in order.

Research Question 1. What Are Students' Personal Characteristics?

Many researchers conducted studies on different student populations in higher education (Eddy, Christie, & Rao, 2006, Robbins, Lauver, Le, David, Langley, & Caristrom, 2004, Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003; Cohen, Brawer & Evelyn, 2002; Wawrzynski, Kish, Balon, & Sedlacek, 1999). These studies illustrated a complex and diverse student population with varied educational, economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003; Wawrzynski, Kish, Balon, & Sedlacek, 1999). The studies of Wawrzynski et al.(2003, 1999) found that students were 53% female, 14% African American, 14% Asian American or Pacific Islander, 6% Hispanic, and 65% white. Cohen and Brawer (2003) and Cohen, Brawer, and Evelyn (2002) found that increased numbers of adult learners, students of color, and women have joined the traditional student population. In the current study, race/ethnicity identification illustrated the following breakdown: 49.5% Caucasian, 32.3% Hispanic, 9.2% African American, 4.1% Asian American, and 4.6% American Indian or multiethnic. This corroborates the numbers found in Wawrzynski et al. and Cohen et al.'s findings that many adult learners tended to be women of color who joined the student population.

The examination of traditional and nontraditional students emerged from the review of literature as it applied to this current study. Traditional students, defined by Eddy, Christie and Rao (2006), are students who completed high school and transferred immediately to college. However, the current study surveyed a sample of students who were older than 25 and not single. This was in alignment with the claim of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2002) from the University of Texas

at Austin, which examined populations of students across the US and found that community college students were typically older, more likely to work, and attended school full-time.

Bean and Metzner (1985) developed a model for nontraditional students that reduced the emphasis on social integration factors (older, working, commuting) because these students have less interaction with others on campus than do traditional students. Their model emphasized the importance of integrating family and school, which often constitute an overriding sense of connectedness for the student and is important for a student's decision to remain in school. This sense of family obligation was the number one reason for rural, urban, and suburban students who worked while going to school. In general, 82% of the study respondents worked full time and 18% worked part-time. Bean and Metzner highlighted the importance of integrating family and school in their model, which paralleled the results of the current study.

A study conducted by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001) showed that factors related to part-time and full-time work could affect a student's motivation to succeed and remain in college. This finding provided information that supported McKenzie and Schweitzer's study that community colleges serve a population that is distinctly different than that of 4-year institutions (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001). Results from the All About Me survey indicated that students at community colleges who were enrolled in CD/ECE programs were predominately nontraditional females who cared for families and worked full time off campus while attending college.

Vincent Tinto (1987) posited that students entered college with family and individual attributes as well as precollege schooling. The current study compared students' mothers and fathers' educational attainment. Parents' levels of education, reported by students, varied significantly by rural, urban, and suburban settings. Parents of suburban students evidenced the highest levels of education. The majority of students were the first in their immediate families to enroll in college, based on reports of parents' education. Tinto equated family and individual attributes to children attending school.

Research Question 2. What Are Students' Goals?

Students in the study were enrolled in 3-4 courses and had completed more than half of their associate degree programs. Townsend (2007) claimed students transferred with all types of associate degrees to 4-year institutions. She concluded that although many students transferred to other postsecondary institutions after completing associate degrees, others sought entry into senior institutions before associate degree completion. The most popular choice of degrees in this study was the Associates of Arts in Teaching which would provide the foundation for teacher certification at the Bachelor's level. A majority of students (81%) planned to transfer to a university. The most important college goals/outcomes were Learning to Communicate Effectively Orally and Acquiring Knowledge and Skills in My Academic Interest Area.

Bean and Eaton (2000) developed a model for nontraditional students based on psychological studies. Bean linked any given behavior with similar past behavior, values, attitudes and intentions. They contend that undergraduate students' determination is influenced not only by their own characteristics, goals, and commitments, but also by

their academic and social experiences while in college. Students in the current study reported that they anticipated a Bachelor's degree by 41.5% and a Master's degree by an additional 32.2%. Most of the rural, urban and suburban students anticipated employment in public schools at the PreK-Elementary School level. Bean and Eaton would contend that these students were influenced by their own educational experience, educational goal and family support.

Research Question 3. What Are Students' Concerns and Perceptions of Preparedness?

Various researchers have investigated the wide-ranging perceptions of the community college (Flaga, 2006; Townsend & Wilson, 2006; Dougherty, 1987). Students perceived faculty as available for questions and meetings, but had mixed judgments about the professors' willingness to help (Townsend, 1993). However, the participants in Townsend and Wilson's (2006) study responded more negatively about the university as compared to community colleges. This would support the current study that strongly endorsed students, in all classifications, interested in interacting with faculty outside of class. Students in rural colleges ranked working with a faculty member higher than those students in urban and suburban colleges. Jenkins (2006) stated that the focus at the community college is not on the professor, but on the student.

Townsend and Wilson's study also supported that students felt there had not been enough writing assignments required at the community college level. Students in the study were concerned about the academic requirements outside of their major.

Rural, urban, and suburban students strongly agreed that their courses should be allowed to transfer from a community college to a university. Townsend and Wilson (2006) noted that one factor that affected transfer was the formation and maintenance of articulation agreements. These agreements between 2-year and 4-year institutions included advising by community colleges and the universities as well as orientation to and availability of support services at the 4-year institution. Liu and Liu (1999) argued that in order to understand student transfer in a sociological context, it was essential to view student departure, not as an individual phenomenon, but as related to the individual's pre-college environment, and as the basis for the individual student's post-college prospects and opportunities.

Research Question 4. What Are Students' Perceptions of College Services and Programs?

College services and programs were ranked for each classification based on the means and standard deviation of the items. The five most frequently used programs and services and the five most important services and programs were ranked by students in rural, urban, and suburban settings. The ratings for frequency of use differed significantly only for Vending Machines. Rural students tended to use them more often than students in urban and suburban colleges. College Libraries and Computer Labs, based on the ratings, were used more frequently by students in all colleges. Libraries and Academic Advising were very important based on the ratings by classification for all students. During a university orientation, students completed the Transfer Student Survey (Wawrzynski, Kish, Balon, & Sedlacek, 1999). Multivariate statistical analysis revealed

differences by race and gender for expectations, academic behaviors, and learning outcomes. The results indicated that students do not all share the same experiences and expectations in an institution. The concerns of students were very divergent. The college services and programs in this study reflected the students' diverse ratings by frequency of use and importance in rural, urban and suburban colleges.

Research Question 5. What Are Students' Support Systems?

Family Support was checked most frequently by students in rural, urban, and suburban colleges followed by Professors Are Experienced and Knowledgeable. Bean and Eaton (2000) contend that a student's educational experiences, educational goals, and family support, influenced the way a student interacted with the college the student attended. The academic and social interactions enabled students to develop a sense of belonging to the institution. With ample academic and social integration into the educational community, students were likely to persist, unless external commitments worked against their persistence.

A Community College-University Partnership (Moore & Wilkinson, 2007) study was conducted with students enrolled in child development courses in 2007. The purpose of the study conducted a needs assessment to determine factors that aid a smooth transition for students from community college to university enrollment, then retention in the Child Development and Teacher Education programs lead to degree completion and successful employment in professional positions in early childhood settings. Surveys were distributed in college classrooms, orientations and on-line to a sample of more than 600 students. The survey identified barriers and concerns of students prior to and after

transfer. A wide range of support systems for students determined what services were most valued and most utilized. Focus groups provided opportunities for traditional and nontraditional students to voice their needs, personal and professional goals, and methods for retention gathered through discussion.

Students reported that favorites at the community college were professors who accommodated students' needs and helped them succeed, along with professors who were experienced and knowledgeable. The report from the students corroborated similar results from the current study. Although Family Support was checked most frequently by students in all classifications, Professors Are Experienced and Knowledgeable followed, as it was an important support item for students from the *Community College-University Partnership* study.

The open-ended question elicited student concerns regarding completing an Associate's Degree or Certificate. Students reported a variety of concerns from finding a job, balancing school work, home life and job responsibility, financing their education to paying their bills, completing academic coursework, scheduling classes around their work and children's schedules, finding courses that fit into their routines, writing a degree plan, understanding what a degree plan, completing academic coursework outside of the major, finding time to complete field experiences, transferring credits to other institutions, deciding what institutions to transfer, and having no concerns.

Conclusions

Who are CDECE students in Texas Community Colleges? Because these students will ultimately directly impact youth and families in a meaningful way, it is important to be cognizant of their demographic and learning profiles.

The findings of the present study led the researcher to the following conclusions.

1. CDECE students from the 15 community colleges in rural, urban and suburban settings were predominately female, white Caucasian, traditional college students in the 18-20 years and 21-25 years categories (52.3%) lived with family or relatives and worked full-time off-campus while attending college. The majority of students were the first in their immediate families to enroll in college, based on reports of parents' education. However, nontraditional college students constituted 47.7% of the population. The racial/ethnic make-up of the sample displayed white Caucasian (49%), Hispanic (32%), African American (10%), Asian American (4%), Multi-Ethnic and Native American (5%). Former state demographer Murdock (2006) identified three population trends for Texas. The population of Texas will show continued and extensive growth, will have an increased diverse population, and will have an aging and age-stratified population. The results of this study were consistent with Murdock's conclusions.
2. Traditional/nontraditional college students were defined three ways. The first defined by the Eddy, Christie, & Rao study (2006), defined the traditional college student going to a community college directly after high school and

then immediately transferring to a 4-year college upon the completion of an associate's degree to pursue a baccalaureate degree. Another approach to defining traditional/nontraditional college students considered marital status. Students in the sample who were single represented 49.9% of the total. A definition that combines both age and marital status classifies single, younger students (less than 25 years) as traditional college students. Students in this group comprised 40.2% of the sample. The older students (26-35 years and 36-60+ years) and those who are not single comprised the remaining 59.8%.

3. The traditional focus of community colleges was on the mission of vocational education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). This has shifted over time from an emphasis on vocational education to an emphasis on community development and transfer. The Associates of Applied Science (A.A.S.) Degree in CDECE represented the original vocational degree obtained by students at a community college. The current study illustrated differences among the patterns of responses from rural, urban, and suburban students, however, the Associates of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) Degree had the greater percentage of students by classifications who sought this transfer degree, thereby supporting the shift of emphasis from vocational to transfer in the Texas community colleges. The A.A.T. will provide the foundation for teacher certification at the Bachelor's level. The highest degree students intended to obtain was a Bachelor's degree (41.5%) and a Master's degree (32.2%). The population of students planned to transfer (81%) compared to students who did not plan to

transfer (19%). The percentage of students who planned to transfer further strengthened the shift at community colleges from vocational to transfer institutions. Students enrolled in 3-4 courses and had completed more than half of their associate degree programs.

4. Students who worked in off-campus jobs indicated that 18% worked less than 20 hours per week, whereas 82% reported working from 20 to 40 or more hours weekly. Students reported working for Personal or Family Obligations. A study by McKenzie & Schweitzer (2001) addressed the social factor such as employment responsibilities affecting student performance. A student's work schedule introduced additional time constraints that affected their motivation to succeed and remain in college. The study confirmed that community college students are more likely to be employed. The current study reported a similar finding.
5. The most important college goal/outcomes were Learning to Communicate Effectively Orally and Acquiring Knowledge and Skills in My Academic Interest Area. Tinto's model of retention had the greatest influence on the understanding of student retention (Tinto, 2001). Students enter with certain commitments, both to finishing college and to staying in college. The academic system is characterized by grade performance and intellectual development, which together lead to academic integration. A social system is entered where peer group interactions and faculty interactions lead to social integration. Academic and social integration work together to influence

ongoing goal commitments. These commitments then lead to the decision to remain in, or to leave college. Townsend (1993) supported the concept that academic integration may play a greater role than social integration in persistence at community colleges. Acquiring knowledge and skills in my academic area and learning to communicate effectively orally could be considered both academic and social integration. Communicating effectively orally could be academic and social skills. Acquiring knowledge and skills in my academic area is academic integration.

6. Students were concerned about the academic requirements outside their major and the transferability of courses completed at other institutions. They were interested in working with a faculty member on a research project, interested in interacting with faculty outside of class and interested in joining campus organizations. Townsend and Wilson (2006) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing students who were classified as transfer students, attended a community college before attending the 4-year institution. The students classified themselves as nontraditional in age. Many of the students discussed their dislike for large classes where professors would not notice or care if the participant attended class or not. Additionally, students did not feel they had a personal connection with the professors, and some professors were more focused on their research than teaching. This focus was different from the community college where the professors' focus is on teaching. The students in the current study expressed an interest in working and interacting with faculty

on a research project and outside of class. According to Townsend and Wilson, this may be difficult to accomplish in a 4-year institution, but not in a community college.

7. Students' perceptions of college services and programs were rated on how important they were and how frequent the college services and programs were used. Reliability for this section was based on inter-item correlations, producing a standardized Cronbach's alphas of 0.957. This indicated excellent reliability. Comparisons among rural, urban, and suburban students were calculated with Kruskal-Wallis tests. The ratings for frequency of use differed only for Vending Machines. Rural students tended to use vending machines more often than students in urban or suburban colleges. Whereas financial aid ranked first for rural and urban students, it did not rank in the top five for suburban students. College libraries and computer labs, based on the ratings were used by students in all colleges. Libraries and academic advising were very important based on ratings by students in rural, urban, and suburban colleges.
8. Students in rural, urban, and suburban colleges responded that family support and professors are experienced and knowledgeable were the two most important support systems to them. This conclusion is substantiated by reviewing Tinto's model of retention. Tinto stated the importance of outside social support (family) systems and academic institutional support (faculty) systems integrate and work together to influence ongoing goal and

institutional commitments. These commitments lead to the decision to remain in school or to leave college. The students responses endorsed Tinto's model that social and academic support systems influence students' commitment to their goals.

9. Results provided a basis for continued efforts to understand the CDECE students in Texas community colleges. Better understandings of the students concerns were more closely examined by the responses to the open-ended question about completing an Associate's Degree or certificate. All respondents ($n = 1047$) feedback may be used to further evaluate the community college programs in areas of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as linking them to other programs and services at the colleges. Suggestions from students also represent student expectations about what a CD/ECE program should provide and the elements that comprise the program.

Limitations

- Students represented 15 of the 28 colleges with chairpersons who agreed to participate.
- Respondents were volunteers and may differ from those who did not complete the survey.
- Students may not have fully understood the questions—ex: inconsistencies in responses related to work, number of hours worked, part-time and full-time work.

- Low reliability of items adapted from Student Transfer Survey by Wawrzynski.

Implications

Findings of the present study have several implications for program chairpersons and faculty, students, administrators and policy makers as they try to understand, plan, and develop programs specifically aimed at improving college experiences for CDECE students. Results suggest that both academic and nonacademic factors relate to college retention and performance. The relationships are strongest when these factors are combined in specific ways. To be successful, then, efforts must address both academic and nonacademic factors. Furthermore, no one strategy is likely to meet the needs of all given students have different reasons for entering college, remaining in college or for leaving college and are likely to respond in different ways to institutional programs. In addition, rural, urban, and suburban colleges have their own unique set of characteristics, requiring them to design programs according to their specific needs, available resources and student population.

Although this study sought to identify and describe the CDECE student population in rural, urban, and suburban Texas community colleges, this should not absolve other institutional departments from the responsibility of participating in the student's educational experience. Program chairpersons and faculty, students, educational administrators and policymakers take an integrative approach to design and develop programs and policies that address both the academic and nonacademic factors that relate

to college retention and performance, and that recognize differences among student populations.

Programs focusing on strengthening students' formal and informal contacts within the institutions provide academic advising and workshops in study skills, time management, critical thinking, planning, assertiveness, library use, and cultural awareness. The aim is to increase levels of academic competence and confidence, motivation, and goal and institutional commitment through the creation of socially supportive and inclusive academic environments.

1. Determine their student characteristics and needs, set priorities among these areas of need, identify available resources, evaluate a variety of successful programs, and implement a formal, comprehensive program that best meets their student and institutional needs.
2. Take an integrated approach in efforts that incorporate both academic and nonacademic factors into the design and development of programs to create a socially inclusive and supportive academic environment that addresses the social, emotional, and academic needs of students.
3. Determine the economic impact of their college programs and their time to degree completion rates through analysis of student dropout, persistence, assessment procedures, and intervention strategies to enable informed decision making with respect to types of intervention required for student success.

It is clear that our educational system needs better alignment and articulation. Each part of the system needs to do a better job of informing students of what is required and expected of them. Students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, as well as many from foreign shores, offer an expanding base of potential students in our programs.

This is a time of rapid change in the way that education is delivered, especially to nontraditional students and learners. On the cautionary side, community college leaders recognize challenges from outside the system to redesign community colleges so they can move with, and ahead of, change.

Four pervasive forces at work inside and outside CDECE programs must be addressed. These include students with changing needs and expectations, new competitors, evolving technology and the drive for performance and accountability. The future of the CDECE programs will depend on how it adapts to the changing needs of society and its student population.

Cohen and Brawer (1996) state that community colleges should be described as untraditional. Community colleges do not follow the tradition of higher education as it developed through the universities. Community colleges change frequently, seeking new programs and students. They are never satisfied with resting on what has been done before; new approaches to old problems are tried. Open channels for individuals are maintained, enhancing the social mobility that has characterized community colleges. The idea that programs can be better is accepted, just as individuals can be better within the programs.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on this study, the following recommendations for future research are as follows:

For Policy: The importance of disseminating this information for policy considerations means to target chairpersons of programs as well as college administrators (deans, vice presidents of academic affairs, and college presidents, colleges' boards of trustees, academic advisors, directors of college services and programs); consider class scheduling and course delivery (due to nontraditional/traditional make-up of students); consider students' concerns about transferability of courses; consider affordability and access to college coursework.

Expand the analysis to look at a larger population of students at other community colleges in Texas. Due to the diversity of the population, a careful examination of international students and their reasons for attending community college, their levels of commitment and their future plans would be of interest. The growing population of Hispanic and African American students in Texas community colleges increases the importance of ascertaining how to assist this group of students retain their interest in school in order to continue their education and attain higher educational levels. Identify the characteristics of first-generation students and their reasons for continuing their education and importance for retaining and completing their degrees or certificates.

For Further Research: Revise, reword, and eliminate items in questionnaire; focus groups and/or interviews to further explain students viewpoints; the next steps could be to follow-up on current students; compare retainees and drop outs to better understand

reasons for retention/attrition in programs and challenges/successes for students who transfer. Examine this study and apply its' findings to include the population of graduating high school students. Use longitudinal data from undergraduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution for the first time and examine how many of these students are still enrolled in college 3 years later. A closer investigation of community college faculty and their importance in the education of students in CDECE programs relates well to the existing body of information as students reported the desire to work with faculty in this study.

Although many in education concur with the importance of technology as a tool for teaching and learning in the CDECE programs, this study did not address this topic. It may be of interest to include the value of multidisciplinary, technology-infused learning and its' impact or importance on students in the field across classifications.

Summary

This chapter discussed a summary of the study as well as the findings related to the research questions. The chapter concluded with implications for program chairpersons, faculty, students, administrators and policy makers based on the findings and recommendations for future research.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Valued Colleagues Letter

Dear Valued Colleagues,

Thank you for agreeing and allowing your CDEC/TECA/EDUC students to participate in my dissertation study, "Community College Students: Smooth Transitions From Colleges of Child Development/Early Childhood Education."

1. How will faculty inform students to participate in the survey? The responsibilities that I ask of you are to encourage students to participate in the survey and the incentive is to show documentation for completing the survey.
2. Please submit the number of students in your program who are taking CDEC/TECA/EDUC courses. It is important for me to obtain as many participants as possible for best results. This will allow me to know total numbers of students across the state and percentages of students who participate.
3. I will remind you all through the listserv to encourage students to participate at the beginning of March. I will also send a follow-up reminder to faculty during the month of March and at the end of March.
4. The survey will be open to students from September 1 to September 28, 2009. There are two ways to access the survey, "Community College: All About Me. Students will go to <https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=127850> or to www.psychdata.com and when asked for the number of the survey, they can type in 127850.
5. Participants will point and click throughout the survey. Participants will not be asked their names; however, they will need to name the Community College they are attending. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the survey.
6. After completing the survey, they will be able to print the last page which is evidence for you that they have participated in the survey process.
7. This is what you will see printed out:

Community College: All About Me

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your input will provide valuable data to help develop a better understanding about your opinions, attitudes and beliefs about community colleges. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort you spent answering these questions.

Please print this page in order to receive extra credit points from your professor(s).

Respectfully,

Elaine Wilkinson

8. If you have questions regarding this survey, you may reach me at ewilkinson@ccccd.edu or 972-881-5967.
9. The completed questionnaire constitutes the student's informed consent to act as a participant in the research.
10. At the end of December, the results of the study will be available. If you are interested in the results, you may contact me directly.

Thank you very much for your participation, support, cooperation and enthusiasm in this research study!

Most Appreciatively and Sincerely,

Elaine Wilkinson

APPENDIX B

Student Documentation Page for Professor(s)

Community College: All About Me

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your input will provide valuable data to help develop a better understanding about your opinions, attitudes and beliefs about community colleges. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort you spent answering these questions.

Please print this page as documentation for your professor(s).

Respectfully,

Elaine Wilkinson

APPENDIX C

Community College: All About Me Student Survey

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DENTON • DALLAS • HOUSTON

www.twu.edu



Dear Student,

Hello, my name is Elaine Wilkinson, and I need your help. As a valued student at your Community College, you are invited to take part in my dissertation research study with Texas Woman's University by filling out the attached questionnaire. As a student, your education is extremely important to you. Some of you will decide to transfer to a university after attending community college. Others of you will decide to complete a certificate and/or degree at the community college and then join the workforce. Whatever your decision is, your perceptions as a student are very valuable to this study and will assist others to better understand the college experiences of students majoring in Child Development/Early Childhood Education. This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Your insight would be invaluable.

Your answers are confidential and you will not be asked to provide your name on this questionnaire; only the name of the Community College you are attending. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, or Internet transactions. However, the information requested via online in this study will not be identifiable. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by the law. Your completed questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research.

At the end of the questionnaire you have the option to print the last page of this survey for your professor(s) as documentation for participating in this study.

Results of this study will be available at the conclusion of the study in December. If you are interested in the results you may contact me directly (ewilkinson@ccccd.edu or 972-881-5967).

Thank you for your help; I am truly grateful.

Elaine

-----Page Break-----



TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

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I. Background Information

*1) Name of your Community College:

2) Which degree or certificate are you seeking at a community college? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Associate of Applied Science Degree, Child Development
☐ Child Development Certificate

- ☐ Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)
- ☐ Early Childhood Specialization
- ☐ Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree, EC-4/EC-6
- ☐ Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree, Grades 4-8
- ☐ Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree, Grades 8-12
- ☐ Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree, EC-12
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

*3) How many courses are you taking this semester?

*4) What are the total number of credit hours you have completed?

*5) Where do you see yourself working in the next five years?

-Select-

- Public School - Pre-K/Elementary
- Public School - Middle or High School
- Child Care Program (Private, Franchise or Corporate Sponsored, Head Start)
- Other (Please specify)

Other:

*6) Are you planning to transfer to a university?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

*7) What is the highest academic degree you intend to obtain?

- ☐ Associate's
- ☐ Bachelor's
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ Ph.D. or Ed.D.
- ☐ Law (LL.B. or J.D.)
- ☐ Divinity (B.D. or M.Div.)
- ☐ Medical (M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.)
- ☐ Not Applicable

*8) Which of the following is a major consideration in your decision making?

- ☐ Relatively inexpensive
- ☐ Geographical location
- ☐ Offers kind of program that I want
- ☐ Recommendation of family/friends
- ☐ Reputation of program/school
- ☐ Size of institution
- ☐ Availability of financial aid
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

9) Which universities are you considering?

- 1st choice
- 2nd choice



II. Please answer the following statements using the scale to the right.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10)	I feel adequately prepared for the academic demands at a college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11)	I am concerned about my ability to finance my college education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12)	My high school prepared me well for college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13)	I am concerned with developing a course schedule that meets my other obligations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14)	I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the academic work of a college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15)	If better jobs were available that did not require a bachelor's degree, I would not go to college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16)	I am concerned about adjusting to a new academic environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17)	I would be interested in living on-campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18)	I feel adequately prepared for the math demands that I will have in my coursework.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19)	I am concerned about course availability.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20)	I would consider seeking study skills training at a college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21)	I feel adequately prepared for the writing demands that I will have in my coursework.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22)	I am concerned about the transferability of my courses completed at other institutions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23)	I would be interested in working with a faculty member on a research project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24)	My family encourages me to continue my college education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25)	Getting a broad and well-rounded education is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26)	I am interested in joining campus organizations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27)	I am interested in interacting with faculty outside of class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28)	I am concerned about the academic requirements outside my major.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29)	I am NOT likely to change my major?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

III. Please indicate how important the following college goals/outcomes are to you.

		Very Important	Important	Undecided	Not too important	Not at all important
30)	learning to communicate effectively in writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31)	learning to communicate effectively orally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32)	acquiring technology skills for work and life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33)	acquiring knowledge and skills in my academic interest area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34)	acquiring knowledge in areas that complement/enhance my academic interest area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35)	participating in community service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36)	learning to think and reason	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37)	developing leadership skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

IV. At present, how often do you do the following?

- 38) Are you currently employed and working with children?
 - Select -
☐ Yes
☐ No

- 39) What type of work are you currently employed?
☐ Working in child care
☐ Working with children
☐ Other (Please specify)

- *40) Do you work at an off-campus job?
☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Do not work

- *41) Do you work at an on-campus job?
☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Do not work

If you work, please answer questions 40 or 41. If you don't work, please skip to question 44.

		1-9	10-14	15-19	20-29	30-39	40 or More
42)	How many hours per week do you work at an off-campus job?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43)	How many hours per week do you work at an on-campus job?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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V. Please indicate the importance of reasons you do or would work while in college.

		Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason for me
44)	help pay for your college education (tuition, books, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45)	take care of personal or family obligations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46)	earn extra spending money (clothes, snacks, gas, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47)	gain general job experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48)	gain job experience related to your anticipated major	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49)	career exploration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50)	career networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Courses

VI. Please answer the following statements about courses using the scale to the right.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
51)	I should be allowed to transfer all courses from a community college to a university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52)	Courses I took at community college are related to courses I will be taking at a university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53)	I prefer completing my coursework at community college before considering courses at a university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54)	I would prefer taking courses at a community college before enrolling in courses at a university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55)	I would prefer for professors from a university to teach higher level courses on my community college campus before I transfer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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VII. Support Services

Please check the boxes that represent the frequency and importance of the following college services and programs.

		How frequently do you use these services	How important are these services to you
56)	Student Orientation	-Select- - Weekly - Monthly - Occasionally - Never	-Select- - Very Important - Somewhat Important - Not Important
57)	Academic Advising Center	-Select-	-Select-
58)	Libraries	-Select-	-Select-
59)	Computer Labs	-Select-	-Select-
60)	Fitness Center	-Select-	-Select-
61)	Athletics	-Select-	-Select-
62)	Dental Hygiene Clinic	-Select-	-Select-
63)	Student Life	-Select-	-Select-
64)	Disability Support Services	-Select-	-Select-
65)	Cafeteria/Food Service	-Select-	-Select-
66)	Vending Machines	-Select-	-Select-
67)	Media Services	-Select-	-Select-
68)	Printing Services	-Select-	-Select-
69)	Bookstore	-Select-	-Select-
70)	Art Galleries	-Select-	-Select-
71)	Honors Program	-Select-	-Select-
72)	Learning Community	-Select-	-Select-
73)	Service Learning	-Select-	-Select-
74)	Academic and Personal Enhancement Courses	-Select-	-Select-
75)	Student Leadership Programs	-Select-	-Select-
76)	Student Ambassadors	-Select-	-Select-
77)	Mentor Program	-Select-	-Select-
78)	Developmental Education	-Select-	-Select-
79)	Dual Admission	-Select-	-Select-
80)	Writing Center	-Select-	-Select-
81)	Math Lab	-Select-	-Select-
82)	Tutoring	-Select-	-Select-
83)	Testing Center	-Select-	-Select-
84)	Information Center	-Select-	-Select-
85)	Counseling Services -- Personal	-Select-	-Select-
86)	Transfer Resources	-Select-	-Select-

***101) Racial/ethnic group:**

- ☐ African-American/Black
- ☐ Asian/Asian-American/Pacific Islander
- ☐ White Caucasian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino/Latina
- ☐ Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ Multi-Ethnic (Please specify)

What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents?

		Elementary school or less	Some high school	High school graduate	Postsecondary school other than college	Some college	College degree	Some graduate school	Graduate degree
102)	Father								
103)	Mother								

-----Page Break-----

Please print this page in order to serve as documentation for your professor(s).

Community College: All About Me

Thank you very much for your time and participation in this study. Your input will provide valuable data help develop a better understanding about your opinions, attitudes and beliefs about community colleges. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort you spent answering these questions. Your completed questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research.

Most Respectfully,

Elaine Wilkinson

Please click on "Submit"

Submit

powered by www.psychdata.com

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

COMMUNITY COLLEGE: ALL ABOUT ME*

Dear Student,

Hello, my name is Elaine Wilkinson, and I need your help. As a valued student at your Community College, you are invited to take part in my dissertation research study with Texas Woman's University by filling out the attached questionnaire. As a student, your education is extremely important to you. Some of you will decide to transfer to a university after attending community college. Others of you will decide to complete a certificate and/or degree at the community college and then join the workforce. Whatever your decision is, your experience as a student is very valuable to this study and will assist others to better understand the process of entering college. If you have approximately 15-20 minutes, your insight would be invaluable.

Your answers are confidential and you will not be asked to provide your name on this questionnaire; only the name of the Community College you are attending. However, at the end of the questionnaire you will need to print the last page of this survey for your professor(s) as documentation for participating in this study. This information will be permanently deleted from the database. Results of this study will be available at the conclusion of the study in December. If you are interested in the results you may contact me directly (cwilkinson@ccccd.edu or 972-881-5967). Your completed questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research.

Thank you for your help, I am truly grateful.

Elaine

*Permission to adapt and use the *Transfer Student Survey* was granted by Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski, Michigan State University.

APPENDIX E

Email Reminder

**Reminder E-mails to Child Development/Early Childhood Education Program
Chairpersons**

Just a reminder to encourage your students to complete the online survey!!!

If you have questions regarding this survey, you may reach me at ewilkinson@ccccd.edu or 972-881-5967. The completed questionnaire constitutes the student's informed consent to act as a participant in the research. At the end of December, the results of the study will be available. If you are interested in the results, you may contact me directly.

Thank you very much for your participation, support, cooperation and enthusiasm in this research study!

Most Appreciatively and Sincerely,

Elaine Wilkinson
Doctoral Student at Texas Womans' University

APPENDIX F

Phone Calls

Phone Calls

Phone call reminders will be made to the Program Chairperson of the particular college whose students have not submitted online surveys.

Hello, Program Chairpersons name. This is Elaine Wilkinson calling to remind you that I have not received your students online surveys. There is/are still number of day(s) for your students to access the survey. Please remind them to do so as soon as possible. I know that this will be valuable information for all of us in Texas! Thanks for your support and cooperation.