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The Impact of Intrusive Advising on Academic Self Efficacy Beliefs in First-Year Students in Higher Education

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE IMPACT OF INTRUSIVE ADVISING ON ACADEMIC SELF EFFICACY
BELIEFS IN FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

LAUREN KEMNER MILLER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I embarked on the journey to complete my PhD, I was as eager to finish as I was to begin my program of study. My over-zealousness became apparent to one of my professors, Dr. Larry Braskamp. Upon completing his course he said to me, “You have to be patient. Earning your doctorate takes time, don’t rush it.” I now realize how accurate his words were. Eight years, and a marriage and two kids later, I am finally finishing my degree.

First and foremost, I would have never envisioned this accomplishment if not for the ongoing support of my parents. Their famous words, “You can be whatever you want to be in life if you just put your mind to it,” I have taken to heart. Their encouragement has given me the drive and motivation to complete my PhD and to continue to aspire to greater things in my professional and personal lives.

I am also grateful for the support of my husband, Josh, and two children, Hannah and Nathan. This dissertation was written over countless of weekends when Daddy was in charge. Josh’s support helped me balance the demands of work, home, and school so that I could reach this milestone and keep my sanity. My hope is that by earning my doctorate, I can be a positive role model to my children and provide them with the same message my parents gave to me.

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discipline, and dedication to his students, I would not have achieved this milestone. Terry spent countless hours examining and editing numerous drafts and meeting with me to fine tune the many details of my dissertation.

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Although arduous, the process of earning my doctorate is one I will look back on fondly. It was a time in which I learned much about the discipline as well as myself. I began the process as a rookie in my career and life, and I am finishing the time as a knowledgeable higher education administrator, wife, and mother. I leave this experience with a quote I recently read by Carl Sandburg, “Nothing happens unless first a dream.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Challenges Facing First-Year Students	2
Freshman Attrition	4
Academic Advising	5
Supporting First-Year Students through Intrusive Academic Advising	8
The Role of Academic Self Efficacy in Explaining Student Success	9
Challenges Facing Higher Education Institutions	10
Financial Pressures on Students and Institutions	10
Increased Focus on Accountability	11
Purpose of the Study	12
Research Questions	13
Significance of the Study	14
Conclusion	15
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	17
Introduction	17
Challenges Facing First-Year Students in the 21 st Century	18
Trends Among First-Year Students	19
Demographic Trends Among First-Year Students Influencing Retention	21
Racial and ethnic diversity	21
Age: adult students	23
Age: traditional age students	24
Socio-economic status	26
First-generation college status	27
Supporting first-year students	28
Academic Advising	31
An Historical Perspective on Academic Advising	32
Theoretical Approaches Impacting Academic Advising	35
Intrusive Advising	39
Current Research on Intrusive Advising	41
Self Efficacy Beliefs	45
Self Efficacy Defined	45
Self Efficacy and Academic Achievement	49
Conclusion	56
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	60
Introduction	60
Rationale for Using a Mixed Methods Research Design	61

Grounded Theory	63
Research Design	65
Site Selection and Access	65
Population	66
Sampling Criteria	66
Obtaining Informed Consent	67
Instrumentation	69
Semi-Structured Interviews	69
College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI)	70
Data Collection	71
College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI)	71
Semi-Structured Interview	72
First interview	73
Second interview	74
Post-interview transcript management	75
Data Analyses	76
Qualitative Content Analysis of Transcript Data	76
Quantitative Analysis	77
Integration of Data	77
Trustworthiness	78
Credibility	78
Transferability	79
Dependability	80
Confirmability	80
Limitations of Methodology	81
Conclusion	82
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	84
Introduction	84
Participant Background	86
Data Analysis	90
What are First-Year College Student Expectations for the Intrusive Academic Advising Experience That They Anticipate Receiving During Their First Term of Enrollment?	90
To What Extent Do Academic Self Efficacy Perceptions of First-Year Students Engaged in an Intrusive Academic Advising Program Change During Their First Term of Enrollment?	93
High school experiences	94
Definition of academic success: first interview	95
First-term college experiences	97
Self efficacy rating	99
Perceived strength of the student-advisor relationship	104
What Do First-Year Students Believe Makes an Impact on Their Academic Self Efficacy Beliefs During Their First Term?	105

To What Extent and in What Ways Do First-Year College Students Believe the Quality of Their Intrusive Academic Advising Experiences Contribute to Their Transition Into the Academic Life of Their Institution?	107
Conclusion	111
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	114
Summary of the Study	114
Key Conclusions	117
Recommendations for Future Practice	120
Institutional Considerations	121
Academic Advising Department Considerations	122
Recommendations for Future Research	124
Conclusion	126
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE	128
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT	130
APPENDIX C: SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY	134
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW 1 PROTOCOL	137
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW 2 PROTOCOL	140
APPENDIX F: COLLEGE SELF EFFICACY INVENTORY (CSEI)- REVISED	143
APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	147
REFERENCE LIST	149
VITA	160

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Participant Characteristics	86
2. Mean Scores for Academic-Course Self Efficacy	100
3. Mean Scores for Academic-Social Self Efficacy	101
4. Two-Sample T-tests for CSEI Results	102

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The faces of students in American higher education have changed significantly in the past few decades. The concept of a “traditional college student” has been challenged as questions of its continued existence are posed. Gone are the days when higher education was seen primarily as a white, upper-class, man’s opportunity for enrichment. A college degree is now seen as a necessity for upward mobility for individuals from all socio-economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds. College campuses have become diverse mixes of age, race, ethnicity, and social class (Ishler, 2005). As these changes have occurred in the student population, additional challenges have risen in the higher education environment. Retention rates among first-year students have improved minimally despite numerous interventions and other efforts by institutions (Barefoot, 2000; Tinto, 2004). High numbers of first-year students are leaving college due to insufficient academic skills, inabilities to adjust to the academic and social life of college, limited commitments to the goal of completing college, as well as a lack of broader integration into the college community (Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Tinto, 1987). In addition, while external funding for higher education has decreased (Moser, 2008; “The New Higher Education Act”, 2008), institutions have necessarily increased tuition rates at a pace higher than inflation (Brown & Gamber, 2002; Gibbs, 1999; Rooney, 2003), making

it very difficult for many students to afford a college education. All of these circumstances combine to create challenges in educating and retaining first-year students

Challenges Facing First-Year Students

Numerous challenges exist that contribute to first-year student attrition rates. Many college students are unprepared to do college-level work (Carter, 2007). They have not developed the basic habits they need to be successful in college-level courses. According to Sax (2003) recent trends in academic records send a mixed message. While a stronger record of achievement exists (i.e., grade-point averages increasing), the commitment to studying and homework has lessened (Sax, 2003, p.16). Students entering higher education must also face developmental challenges adjusting to college-level learning. “Postsecondary settings, with their increased emphasis on student autonomy and independence, require a high degree of self-directed learning from students. Because of this demanding context, it is even more important for students’ academic success that they develop more self-directed behaviors” (Ruban & McCoach, 2005, p. 476).

First-year students also lack self-awareness. They often make college major and career decisions when they are unaware of their strengths and weaknesses or how they learn best (Carter, 2007). In addition, a disconnect exists between staff, faculty, and students. Staff and faculty may provide students with basic needs, such as advising, tutoring and discipline-based education, but they are not promoting student interest, motivation, and drive to continue in more challenging times (Carter, 2007, p.4).

Students’ concern about paying for college is also on the rise. Sax (2003) reports “65.3 percent of students have at least some concern about their ability to pay for college.

Further, a record 47.1 percent of freshmen expect to take jobs in order to finance their education”(p.19). This concern is warranted as current tuition charges are increasing at rates outpacing inflation (Brown & Gamber, 2002; Gibbs, 1999; Rooney, 2003) and federal grant dollars have decreased (Moser, 2008; “The New Higher Education Act”, 2008).

The American family has been undergoing a transformation that impacts first-year students. The divorce rate has more than doubled from 1960 to 1998 and the number of children born to unmarried persons increased from 6 percent to 32 percent during this same period (Ishler, 2005, p.23). According to McLanahan (1994), “family disruption continues to reduce children’s school achievement after high school” (p. 48). Similarly, Kiernon (1992) found that middle class students are less likely to enroll and stay enrolled in college if they come from a divorced or single-parent family.

The lack of integration and membership into the academic and social aspects of the college community brings additional challenges to first-year students. This may be the result of incongruity, or a mismatch, between students and higher education institutions. Feelings of isolation can occur when an absence of significant contact between students and faculty or staff of the institution exists, making students unable to establish personal bonds with others (Tinto, 1987, p. 5). Incongruity “reflects the person’s evaluation of the manner and degree to which the social and intellectual life of the institution serves his or her interests and needs” (p. 5). It reflects the outcome of interactions with different members of the institution. Students may then leave, not

because of the absence of integration, but rather due to the lack of desire to integrate at a particular institution (Tinto, 1993, p.50).

Freshman Attrition

National first-year to second-year retention rates for 2007-2008 averaged 65.7 percent across all higher education institutions. Two-year public institutions, as a sector, experienced the lowest retention at 53.7 percent and doctoral-granting private institutions had the highest retention at 80.4 percent (ACT Institutional Data File, 2008). Over the past few decades hundreds of first-year experience programs have been developed in higher education to target student retention. Yet, with nearly 35 percent of all first-year students still leaving colleges and universities annually, the need to implement effective strategies that address this attrition still exists (Barefoot, 2000, p.14). “Widespread institutional recognition of, and response to, the importance of the first year is a late-twentieth-century phenomenon. Beginning around 1980 and continuing to the present, higher education in the United States has witnessed a grass-roots movement to improve the first college year” for students (Barefoot, 2000, p.12).

According to Barefoot (2000) more evidence is needed on effective strategies that improve the transition from high school to college. “We need to go beyond simply measuring student retention. Although retaining students is important to institutions and to students themselves, the primary objective of the collegiate experience is, after all, learning - both in and out of the classroom” (Barefoot, 2000, p. 18).

According to Tinto (2004), a key component in retention is ensuring ample support for student learning. Providing academic, social, and personal support is

necessary to foster student success. Support should be connected to student learning needs. This connection will help empower students to seek support when needed (Tinto, 2004, p.8). Directing students toward other students, faculty and staff who support student learning can aid in their persistence to graduation (p. 9).

While considering learning and retention of first-year students, little research has been published that examines specific programs or structures that may enhance the student experience. These aspects, for example, include course scheduling, freshman teaching, and the structure of academic advising. Most of the research has focused primarily on characteristics of students or their environments outside of higher education, such as family support or academic preparedness. “Little scrutiny has been given to the way the college or university experience is organized and delivered” for first-year students (Barefoot, 2004, p.11).

Hsieh, Sullivan, and Guerra’s (2007) study suggests that programs are needed that help students develop skills to facilitate academic success. This may involve providing students with academic advising that targets goal-setting and developing high self-efficacy beliefs (p.470). Additional research is still needed in this area to help develop appropriate intervention programs that can lead to academic success for first-year students (p.471).

Academic Advising

According to Light (2001), “good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (p.B11). Academic advising involves professional relationships between advisors and students that provide guidance to

students as they make educational choices. Topics addressed in this relationship include “requirements imposed by institutions, departments, and outside agencies to students’ notions about their intellectual interests and vocational goals” (Frost, 2000, p.3). Three approaches to advising have been advocated in the literature: prescriptive, developmental and integrated advising (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Prescriptive advising was first defined by Crookston (1972) as an authoritarian relationship in which the advisor prescribes academic plans for students and students assume no responsibility for decision-making. Students rely on advisor recommendations, which focus primarily on course selection, degree requirements, and registration (Crookston, 1972, p.13).

“Developmental academic advising is defined as a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources” (Ender, Winston Jr., & Miller, 1984, p.19). There is a stronger focus on intellectual and personal growth in developmental advising compared to the prescriptive approach. Integrated advising has been proposed by researchers who support a more comprehensive method that emphasizes both informational and counseling roles found in the prescriptive and developmental approaches (Andrews, Andrews, Long & Henton, 1987; Frost, 1993; Trombley, 1984).

An example of integrated advising, intrusive academic advising, incorporates techniques used from prescriptive and developmental strategies (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). It is defined as “intensive advising intervention with an at-risk student that is designed to (a) facilitate informed, responsible decision-making, (b) increase student

motivation toward activities in his/her social/academic community, and (c) ensure the probability of the student's academic success" (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, *Intrusive Advising Model*, para.1). An intrusive approach initiates early contact and helps students develop plans for academic and social improvement (Smith, 2007, p. 814). As student populations have changed, intrusive advising has been developed to create relationships that involve shared responsibility, proactive interactions to meet student goals, and encouragement as students transition into college and matriculate through to graduation (Earl, 1987b, p.29). "Academic advising...is perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students sustained interaction with a caring and concerned adult who can help them shape such an experience" (Hunter & White, 2004, p.20).

Numerous studies have been completed to investigate the impact of intrusive academic advising on students. Through this research, intrusive advising has been found to contribute to significant improvements in graduation rates and grade point averages (GPA) for students on academic probation (Austin, 1997; Backhus, 1989; Lopez, 1988). While these are necessary and important results to support the potential efficacy of intrusive academic advising on college campuses, they have not considered the potential qualitative and developmental impact intrusive advising may have on students. Graduation rate may no longer be enough in demonstrating competence of an institution. Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) and accrediting bodies, such as the Higher Learning Commission, are pressuring colleges and universities to further demonstrate evidence of student learning outcomes. Both bodies are pointing towards the need for evidence that learning has occurred. While

graduation rates can be linked to learning, a greater need exists to demonstrate what learning has occurred and how academic support departments facilitate the learning process (The Higher Learning Commission, 2007).

Supporting First-Year Students through Intrusive Academic Advising

“The freshman year, indeed the first term of that year, represents a critical point in a student’s life—for many it is their first opportunity to make independent decisions about their future. Frequency of contact with advisors during this critical period enhances the student’s sense of ‘connectedness’ with the institution as well as providing opportunities for advisors to lend decision-making support” (Crockett & Levitz, 1984, p.42).

Academic advising is an important component to the first-year experience. Researchers have agreed that first-year students who use academic advising services are more likely to persist than students who do not use those services (Beal & Noel, 1980; Thomas, 1990). “High quality advising,” involving more frequent contact, has been found to have a significant negative effect on the intent to leave an institution (Metzner, 1989, p. 404). Intrusive academic advising, which “requires contact between students and advisors at important points in the student’s educational decision-making process” (Crockett & Levitz, 1984, p. 43), has experienced increasing support in advising literature on first-year students (Earl, 1987b; Heisserer & Parette, 2002). However, as first-to-second-year persistence rates wane, more evidence and information about what works is needed (Barefoot, 2000, p. 18). More evidence is needed regarding the impact of intrusive advising for first-year students, aside from retention rates and grade point average.

The Role of Academic Self Efficacy in Explaining Student Success

The importance of academic self efficacy as a key factor in the success of high school-to-university transition was highlighted by Chemer, Hu, and Garcia (2001). Hseigh, Sullivan and Guerra (2007) also proposed that students with more confidence are more likely to persist in college. Students not only need to have the ability to acquire the skills to be academically successful, but also have the belief they can perform well academically. People's beliefs about their "capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" have a strong impact on their motivation and confidence (Bandura, 2001, p. 118). These beliefs comprise self efficacy. Bandura (1986) defined self efficacy as a "judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p.391). Self efficacy impacts motivation by influencing goals people set for themselves, the effort put into meeting those goals, and how long they persist when faced with adversity. Academic self-efficacy beliefs, therefore, are judgments related to academic performance and the ability to accomplish educational goals (Bandura, 2001).

Higher education settings have an increased focus on personal autonomy and independence, requiring a high amount of self-directed learning from students. As a result, academic self efficacy has emerged as a key component in explaining academic and personal success (Ruban & McCoach, 2005). Numerous studies have found the positive effect of academic self efficacy on academic performance (Fenollar, Roman, Cuestas, 2005; Hseigh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984). Understanding how academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students are impacted by

intrusive advising strategies will provide further insight into effective components of first-year experience programs that promote academic success.

Challenges Facing Higher Education Institutions

Pressures on colleges and universities are continually rising. Tightening of state budget dollars, stagnant federal grant dollars, increased focus on accountability and new requirements from the recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act have put added strains on institutions. Academic support departments must further demonstrate the value they provide students as budgets tighten and higher education institutions are held more accountable for student learning outcomes.

Financial Pressures on Students and Institutions

Changes in national priorities have impacted federal funding for higher education. One example is the dwindling role of the Pell Grant in helping low-income students pay for college. "...in the 1970s, a Pell Grant covered more than 50 percent of a student's direct costs at a public four-year college and peaked at almost 80 percent. Today the average grant covers only about 30 percent of tuition, room, and board" (Difeliciantonio, 2008, para. 5). The Pell Grant has seen little change, whereas college tuition increases on an annual basis. Recently, Congress moved to raise the maximum award to \$5,400 from \$4,310 over the next five years (para.7). However, considering that the rate of inflation has increased an average of 3 percent annually (Rooney, 2003), this increase will hardly have an impact on financing a college education.

State funding of public institutions has also been reduced in economic downturns. "Higher education funding is a volatile component of state spending. States make

increases during good economic times, but are forced to freeze support or make only small increases during economic downturns” (“The New Higher Education Act”, 2008, Higher Education Spending, para. 2). The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act may actually lower the amount states devote to higher education over time because of a provision that mandates that states must not reduce spending below the average for the last five years. Therefore, in a good economic year when states may have previously given additional funding to higher education, they may now think twice since it will impact future funding obligations (Higher Education Spending, para. 2).

Federal and state funding pressures have led to a common trend at higher education institutions: raising tuition while at the same time cutting institutional budgets (Rooney, 2003). As institutions determine where to make budget reductions, academic support departments must demonstrate the value they provide to students. An intrusive advising department can be a significant expense on institutional budgets when considering staffing needs. According to Habley (2004), the average advisor load for 4-year public institutions is 285/1 and 153/1 for 4-year private institutions. There are significant costs that factor in to adequately staffing an intrusive advising department while considering these averages.

Increased Focus on Accountability

Rising tuition costs have increased public scrutiny of colleges and universities. In 2005 Margaret Spellings commissioned a bipartisan Committee on the Future of Higher Education to discuss the need to strengthen higher education to remain competitive in the 21st century. Accessibility, affordability, and accountability were the three components of

the proposal. According to Spellings, “No current ranking system of colleges and universities directly measures the most critical point—student performance and learning” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, Accountability). Colleges and universities must be transparent to students, parents, and the community on what their students are learning and how they are accomplishing their mission. Traditional measures such as ACT/SAT scores and selectivity indicators are no longer adequate indicators of accountability (Morphew, 2008, para.4). Accrediting bodies have begun updating their criteria for accreditation to reflect the focus on student learning outcomes. The Higher Learning Commission for the North Central Association updated its accreditation criteria in 2005 with a primary focus on student learning. Two-thirds of the core components for the five criteria relate to student learning (The Higher Learning Commission, 2007).

Purpose of Study

Preliminary information provided in this chapter points to the current challenges facing first-year students at colleges and universities. Academic support departments have to demonstrate how they support student learning, as well as prove their value to higher education institutions. Chapter II provides a more in-depth analysis of first-year students, academic advising, and academic self efficacy beliefs. Although the research on the relationship between intrusive advising and retention and GPA, as well as the relationship between self efficacy beliefs and GPA is abundant, there has been no consideration regarding how intrusive advising and academic self efficacy relate to each other and to first-year student success.

Given the increased need to support first-year students, the purpose of the study is to examine the intrusive advising approach and its influence on academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. The study can hopefully provide further evidence that institutions should continue allocating resources for advising departments. There is a push for greater accountability for higher education institutions to demonstrate how they provide environments that support student development and learning. By exploring the link between intrusive advising and academic self efficacy beliefs, further evidence can be established.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study and examine the connection between intrusive academic advising and academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students.

1. What are first-year college student expectations for the intrusive academic advising experience that they anticipate receiving during their first term of enrollment?
2. To what extent do academic self efficacy perceptions of first-year students engaged in an intrusive academic advising program change during their first term of enrollment?
3. What experiences do first-year students believe make an impact on their academic self efficacy beliefs during their first term?

4. To what extent and in what ways do first-year college students believe the quality of their intrusive academic advising experiences contribute to their transition into the academic life of their institution?

These questions serve as the foundation for a mixed methods study that involves interviewing first-year students involved in intrusive advising programs and comparing those findings with results from an academic self efficacy survey.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it has the potential to demonstrate to what extent intrusive academic advising may foster positive academic self efficacy beliefs and help first-year students in the transition into the college environment. Through the examination of student expectations for and perceptions of their academic experiences, new insights can be made that address the research questions.

This study addresses the existing holes in the research that have been identified regarding the relationship between intrusive advising and self efficacy. The need for advising research was recognized at the first National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) conference in the late 1980's. In response, the National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising was established at Ohio State University in 1989 to spearhead this initiative (Tuttle, 2005). However, a study of articles published between 1981 through 1997 found that the number published on academic advising had decreased over time and many were not founded on empirical research. Most articles centered on general topics including administrative structures, developmental advising, and advising different student populations. "Direct research on the impact of advising on student success and

the effectiveness of advising practices has been very limited” (Gordan & Grites, 1998, p.21).

According to Fenollar, Roman and Cuestas (2005), qualitative research in the area of self efficacy and academic performance is needed to supplement existing quantitative research (Bong, 2001; Boulter, 2002; Fenollar, Roman & Cuestas, 2005; Hseigh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984). Qualitative methods can be useful in understanding the social settings in which these concepts are embedded. Through the use of open-ended interviews, students can provide feedback from their own perspectives, rather than having a researcher’s theoretical perspective imposed on what is said (Fenollar et al., 2005, p. 886).

Uwah, McMahon, and Furlow (2008) call for further research to understand the specific nature of the relationship between members of the school community and students that impacts student beliefs of their ability to be successful in school. Multon, Brown and Lent (1991) suggest further research is needed to study intervention components for their impact on self efficacy and academic outcomes (p.35). They propose it would also be valuable to evaluate strategies used to promote self efficacy beliefs (p.36).

Conclusion

The intent of this chapter has been to introduce a study that seeks to understand the impact of intrusive academic advising on academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year college students. In a changing post-secondary climate, academic support departments must demonstrate the value they add to student learning and the student experience.

Intrusive advising has been identified as one of the most underestimated characteristics of a successful college experience (Light, 2001). Existing research has linked intrusive academic advising to increased retention and GPA (Austin, 1997; Backhus, 1989; Lopez, 1988). However, in a climate of enhanced accountability, further evidence is needed to determine the degree of relationship, if any, that exists between intrusive advising and academic self efficacy.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Given the increased need to support first-year students in higher education, the purpose of the study is to examine the intrusive advising approach and its influence on academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. A push exists for greater accountability for higher education institutions to demonstrate how they provide environments that support student development and learning. By exploring the link between intrusive advising and academic self efficacy beliefs, further evidence can be established.

Three areas of research ground this study and provide a framework in which to view the research questions. Current trends and challenges of first-year students are explored. First-to-second year withdrawal rates, averaging 35 percent, point to a need to provide additional support to this student population (ACT Institutional Data File, 2008). Researchers have agreed that first-year students who use academic advising services are more likely to persist than students who do not use those services (Beal & Noel, 1980; Thomas, 1990). Intrusive advising, in particular, has experienced increasing support in advising literature on first-year students (Earl, 1987b; Heisserer & Parette, 2002). This chapter provides an historical perspective of changes made in advising to meet the needs of diverse student populations and explores current research examining the impact of

intrusive advising. Finally, the predictive nature of self efficacy in higher education is explored. Academic self efficacy is a key factor in the success of high school-to-university transitions (Chemers, Hu, and Garcia, 2001). It has been widely demonstrated to have a predictive relationship with academic performance (Bong, 2001; Boulter, 2002; Fenollar, Roman & Cuestas, 2005). These key components, first-year students, intrusive academic advising, and academic self efficacy beliefs, provide an empirically-based foundation for this study.

Challenges Facing First-Year Students in the 21st Century

Part of federal higher education policy is promoting access to education. The focus has been on access for people who would not otherwise attend. However, as college and university doors have opened to broader populations additional challenges in retaining these students have come into focus. Making sure that students not only have access to a college degree but also are successful in staying through the completion of that degree are equally important (Tinto, 2004, p.3). National first-year to second-year retention rates for 2007-2008 averaged 65.7% across all higher education institutions. Two-year public institutions, as a sector, experienced the lowest retention at 53.7% and doctoral-granting private institutions had the highest retention at 80.4% (ACT Institutional Data File, 2008). With nearly 35% of all first-year students leaving colleges and universities annually, the need to implement effective strategies that address this attrition still exists (Barefoot, 2000, p.14). This section will address current challenges faced by first-year students that impact student success, demographic shifts influencing retention, as well as the response of institutions to support this student population.

Trends Among First-Year Students

Through the use of Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys, administered each year to 350,000 to 400,000 entering first-year students, trend data can be analyzed to determine the direction of student adjustment to college, academic experiences and personal challenges in the first-year. Shifts in the 2002 data have provided insight into first-year students. Incoming first-year students have a stronger academic record yet report a declining commitment to studying and homework (Sax, 2003). Concurrently, grade inflation, at the secondary level, has been a point of interest as the percentages of A average students have grown from 17.6% in 1968 to 45.7% in 2002 (Sax, 2003, p. 16). Small improvements on national assessments and standardized tests have occurred, but are marginal relative to the increase in GPA.

Findings from the 2007 CIRP data show similar results in which large percentages of students show indications of academic disengagement. According to Liu, Sharkness, and Pryor (2008), 78.7% “frequently” or “occasionally” turned in course assignments that did not reflect their best work, 70% skipped class, and 62.3% came late to class (p.10). In addition, 44.1% “frequently” or “occasionally” fell asleep in class and 39.1% “frequently” felt bored in class (p.10). These findings suggest “that students are disengaged academically, especially with respect to their attendance patterns and the quality of their completed assignments” (Liu, Sharkness & Pryor, 2008, p.10).

Academic disengagement could be in part due to another disturbing trend among some first-year students: poor academic preparation. More first-year students need remediation in basic skills, such as reading, writing and math (Upcraft & Stephens,

2000). According to Heisserer (2002), academically disadvantaged students are growing in numbers. They may be dependent learners, have a low self-concept, may be deficient in basic skills, and may be hesitant to seek needed support services. In addition, they may lack the study skills necessary to complete assignments and achieve academic success (Heisserer, 2002, Table 1). This is further supported by 2007 CIRP data in which “nearly 2 out of 5 students found it difficult to develop effective study skills as well as to adjust to the academic demands of college” (Liu, Sharkness & Pryor, 2008, p.7).

Financing education is another major concern of incoming first-year students. According to 2007 CIRP data, 70.1% of students report “some” or “major” concern in the ability to pay for college. Over half of students worked for pay on or off campus during their first year. Among first-year students who did work, 35.2 percent felt their job responsibilities “occasionally” or “frequently” interfered with their courses (Liu, Sharkness & Pryor, 2008). These concerns are warranted when considering the rate at which institutions are raising tuition. For example, the College of the Atlantic in Maine increased tuition and fees by 6 percent, University of Tulsa by 10 percent for freshmen and 5 percent for returning students, and the University of Denver increased tuition and fees by 6.3 percent (Rooney, 2003, para. 5).

Tuition increases, along with the dwindling role of the Pell Grant for low-income students, have forced students to look into other ways to pay for college. “In the 1970s, a Pell Grant covered more than 50 percent of a student’s direct costs at a public four-year college and peaked at almost 80 percent. Today the average grant covers only about 30 percent of tuition, room, and board” (Difelicianantonio, 2008, para. 5). The ratio of federal

grants to student loans has changed significantly. “In the early 1970s, 70 percent of federal aid was provided in the form of grants and 25 percent in loans. Today the ratio is almost reversed: 63 percent in loans and 37 percent in grants” (Defelicianantonio, 2008, para.8). These changes make it more difficult for first-year students to pay for a college education. According to a recent study, 69% of African Americans and 43% of white students who enrolled in college but did not finish said that they left college because of high student loan debt (Black Student Graduation Rates, 2007).

Demographic Trends among First-Year Students Influencing Retention

Many changes have occurred in the student populations of U.S. colleges and universities. Once places for aristocratic men to become educated on the Classics, these institutions have adopted comprehensive missions that now educate the masses. Key differences in student populations are centered on racial and ethnic diversity, age, socio-economic status, and first generation status (Upcraft & Stephens, 2000, p.74).

Demographic shifts influence the challenges detailed above and have made it necessary for institutions to improve academic support services in order to better assist diverse student populations.

Racial and ethnic diversity. As the “traditional” white college student is decreasing, African Americans, Latinos, and Asians are growing in significant numbers (Priest & McPhee, 2000, p.107). Demographers anticipate that students of color will comprise 46% of the total higher education student population by the year 2020 (Seurkamp, 2007, p.47). “Our colleges and universities have an increasingly critical

social responsibility to address the growing need to educate this more diverse group of students” (Seurkamp, 2007, p.47).

According to data from the American Council on Education, from 1994 to 2004 enrollment in American higher education increased by 21%. Only 6% of this growth was in white students. The majority of the growth was among minority and unknown racial/ethnic students. “Minority students made dramatic gains, increasing by more than 1.6 million students (or 49%), and students with unknown race/ethnicity increased by nearly 700,000 (or 144%)” (Cook & Cordova, 2007, p. 2). Hispanic enrollment led these gains with an increase of 67% from 1994 to 2004 (p.3). However, even with gains in enrollment, minority students only comprised 28.1% of Associate degree graduates and 22.3% of Bachelor degree graduates in 2004-2005 (p.18).

Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009) maintain that,

As Latinos navigate the many facets of higher education, they are confronted with institutional customs that do not reflect their own traditions and assumption-based practices about students that do not apply to them.... In effect, Latino students are vulnerable to culture shock and feelings of doubt about their ability to succeed in the higher education environment. (p.35)

Schultz, Colten, and Colten (2001) describe similar trends regarding academic success of students of color. “Predominantly White institutions often are unaware of the social, academic, and cultural needs of students of color and of the barriers these students face in completing their 4-year degree” (Schultz et al., 2001, Theoretical background, para.2). These barriers foster inferiority feelings, low academic self-efficacy beliefs, and feelings of isolation. As a result, only 46% of Latinos who enroll in college earn a bachelor degree and only 10% of all Hispanic Americans ages 24-64 graduate from 4-

year institutions (Oseguera et al., 2009, p.23). Similarly, the graduation rate for African-Americans is 43% (Black Student Graduation Rates, 2007). Minority student success in higher education greatly depends on experiences with the educational environment.

Whether or not minority students are provided with validation and positive mentoring influences their decisions to remain enrolled in higher education (Oseguerra et al., 2009).

Support systems, such as intrusive advising and counseling, can help minority students integrate into the social and academic cultures on college and university campuses (Schultz et al, 2001, Theoretical background, para.4).

Age: adult students. After World War II and the GI Bill, American colleges and universities not only experienced large increases in enrollment, but increases in students over the age of 25 as well. By 1997 older students represented 30% of the undergraduate student population (Upcraft & Stephens, 2000, p.75). Between 1995 and 2005, enrollment of students age 25 and older increased by 18% and is expected to increase another 21% from 2005 to 2016 (Digest of Education Statistics, 2008). Therefore, it is important for institutions to develop policies and practices that effectively address the needs of older students both inside and outside the classroom (Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2005).

According to Risquez, Moore, and Morley (2007-2008), adult students have a fear of failure and feel underprepared for the academic demands of higher education. A social struggle exists surrounding traditional age students. This is often translated “into a ‘them and us’ attitude, a subjective experience of being very different from their younger counterparts that created feelings of seclusion, rejection, or insecurity” (Risquez et al.,

2007-2008, p. 192). Adult students also struggle with time management, and balancing home and work responsibilities with new academic requirements. The “discrepancy between the reality of first-year experience and prior expectations often worsens as a result of the inter-role conflicts that accommodating education-related responsibilities involves” (p.193). Dispositional factors such as expectations, self-esteem, level of family support and past educational experiences can also impact the persistence of adult students (Hubble, 2000). Higher education institutions can address these concerns by creating flexible learning options and proactive support mechanisms for adult students (Risquez et al., 2007-2008). Effective tracking systems, timely reports of at-risk indicators, and a strengthened advisory system can support adult student retention (Ben-Joseph, Ryan, & Benjamin, 1999).

A 2005 National Academic Advising Association conference session discussed best practices for advising adult students. Workshop participants recommended the following five strategies:

- 1) Advisors should be involved in and knowledgeable of the student’s position and program.
- 2) Advisors should be attuned to the student’s personal well-being in the learning environment.
- 3) Advisors should be available to the student in a multitude of ways.
- 4) Advisors should be honest with adult learners.
- 5) Advisors should develop and maintain a peer-to-peer relationship with the adult learner. (Marques, 2005, pp.4-5)

Age: traditional age students. High school graduates of traditional age entering college since 2000 are considered part of the Millennial generation. Since most of them are children of Baby Boomers, they are also referred to as the “Echo Boom” (Howe &

Strauss, 2007, p.35). America has approximately 80 million Millennials, which will most likely top 100 million members as future immigrants join this population, making it a third larger than the Baby Boomer generation (p.35). According to Fall, 2007 data, 18- and 19- year-olds made up over 90% of first-year students at 4 year colleges and universities (“This Year’s Freshman,” 2008). Members of this generation are much different than those entering college before them, such as the Baby Boomers or Generation Xers (Howe & Strauss, 2007, pp.11-12).

Millennials are smart, ambitious, incredibly busy, very ethnically diverse, and dominated by girls, to this point. They make decisions jointly with demanding parents (“copurchasing” a college) and believe in big brands (with “reputation” counting for a lot). They are very numerous, very intent on going to college, and look forward to planned career paths.” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p.4)

Howe and Strauss (2007) identified seven core traits that substantially define Millennial generation students: special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured and achieving (pp.59-60).

Due to this new generation of high school graduates, “the nature of every college function from admissions to campus life to the classroom to career counseling will change dramatically” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p.3). The in loco parentis model (i.e., in the place of parents) that was once overthrown by rebellious Baby Boomers will resurface as their own children take over college campuses. Millennial students have grown up feeling protected and expect to be protected. Their parents have built protective environments around their children at home and made similar demands in their grade and high schools. Expectations for college, therefore, are no different. “Just as colleges and universities can expect to be held increasingly accountable for the personal safety of their

students, they can also expect increasing scrutiny of what goes on in (and outside) the classroom” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p.83). Meeting the needs of traditional age high school graduates, as well as their parents, will require higher education institutions to examine educational practices to ensure they are supporting the academic success of first-year students.

Socio-economic status. Recent trends in higher education have put more financial pressure on students and their families. As increases in tuition outpace inflation and government and state grants are depleted (Brown & Gamber, 2002; Gibbs, 1999; Rooney, 2003), students are finding it more difficult to pay for a college education. More and more students need to work while attending college in order to pay for higher tuition bills. As students work more hours, grades can begin to drop and they are more likely to drop out (Upcraft & Stephens, 2000, p.79). The Pell Grant, which provides funding to the neediest undergraduate students, increased 76% in inflation-adjusted dollars from 1993-94 to 2003-04. This was in part due to the increase in students eligible for this award. From 2000-01 to 2003-04, the number of recipients increased by 39%, representing an increase in the number of low-income students attending college (Pell Grant Status Report, 2004).

According to Heisserer (2002), students from low SES backgrounds can have poor self-concepts, histories of academic failure, limited educational experiences as well as family commitments that may impede their educational goals. A study by the Pell Institute (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) found similar results for low-income students. Youth from low-income households are less likely to complete their degree

compared to high-income families, many times due to their lack of academic preparation. Even with the appropriate academic preparation, many of them fail to graduate (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). “Campus climate efforts that fail to acknowledge the culture of our nation’s poor are doomed for failure...For poor students to succeed, institutions of higher education may need to revamp student services” (Jones, 2005, p.146).

First-generation college status. Entangled within the previous categories of students are those considered to be first-generation college students, which comprise 30% of all college enrollments (Strayhorn, 2006, p.83). First-generation students are those first in their family to attend college. They have the challenge of attending college often without the insight from their parents on how to be successful. They need college administrators and faculty to provide reference points for support others may get from their family members. Considering that many first generation students are also racial minorities, they may also have a difficult time finding similar role models on campus (Priest & McPhee, 2000, p. 107).

Hodges (1999) found significant differences between first-generation and non first-generation students relative to the number of semesters attended and cumulative grade point average. This is in part due to working more hours, receiving less support from parents in all aspects of collegiate life, being less likely to live on campus or participate in student organizations, and less likely to work on campus than non first-generation students (Hodges, 1999).

According to McGillan (2003), these challenges can be negated by supportive and positive institutional experiences that develop student self-esteem and academic self-efficacy beliefs. Regardless of the risk factor, student abilities to cope are the best barometers of success. “Factors such as personal autonomy, self-confidence, ability to deal with racism, study behaviors, or social competence have as much or more to do with grades, retention, and graduation than how well a student writes or how competent a student is” (McGillan, 2003, p.48).

Supporting First-Year Students

Since 1980, higher education institutions have put a greater focus on improving the first year of college. This is in part due to institutional survival as well as doing the right thing for first-year students. Even though the student body has changed since this time, many first-year programs are still structured for the population that dominated higher education up to that point: white, middle- or upper-class males (Barefoot, 2000, p.13). Current freshman-to-sophomore retention rates point to a continued need for improvements to the first-year experience.

The transition to college for first-year students is comprised of a range of physical and psychological stressors. First-year students typically leave behind established support systems within families, schools, and communities.

The transition to college may prove stressful both as an accumulation of stress-producing events and from the loss of resources (particularly personal support systems) that have helped these youths cope as secondary students... The process of establishing a peer group, a new college-student identity, and a peer support network while maintaining some degree of familial and community supports can prove a significant challenge. (McGillan, 2003, p.47)

Tinto (2002) proposes five conditions that support first-year students: expectations, support, feedback, involvement, and relevant learning. *Expectations* should be clear and consistent, especially in regards to academic advising. Students need to be aware of what is required for successful completion of courses and programs of study. *Academic and social support* in the form of mentoring and counseling is essential in helping students adjust to college-level learning. Students are also more likely to succeed when they receive frequent and early *feedback* on their academic progress. “Student attrition has its own momentum such that the longer one waits to intervene the more difficult it is to make a difference” (Tinto, 2002, p.3). The more frequently students engage with faculty and staff, the more likely they are to persist. This interaction promotes membership into the college community. Ensuring students find value in the college environment and in what they are learning is key in supporting first-year retention (Tinto, 2002, pp.2-4).

While considering the challenges of first-year students and the resilience needed to overcome them, McGillin (2003) points towards the critical role of academic advisors. Academic advisors are many times the first contact first-year students have within an institution. They may be the only adult support system that is available at the beginning of the first year. Advisors may “be positioned better than others to influence the availability of supportive relationships and encourage the student’s self-esteem and personal efficacy. Academic advisors play a pivotal role in promoting resilience” (McGillan, 2003, p.48). Advisors help students “connect the dots” and develop an understanding of the academic curriculum. They help students determine the most

appropriate courses to take that are suitable for student skill levels, helping to promote more positive self efficacy beliefs (p.51).

Higgins (2003) discusses intrusive advising as an effective strategy with students experiencing academic difficulty. An intrusive relationship involves reaching out to students, helping them identify difficult situations, and determining solutions to those situations. Through proactive interactions, the relationship between students and institutions is fostered, and students learn about institutional supports that can positively influence their academic progress (Interventions that Make a Difference, para.1).

The Adventor Program, at the College of Education at Kutztown University, is an example of an intrusive advising initiative for students of color. Through academic and emotional support services offered by the program, students developed increased feelings of self-worth and self-confidence (Schultz et al., 2001, Academic advising/mentoring relationship, para.2). Results of the program found that 77% of program participants returned for their sophomore year compared to only 67% of the control group (Program assessment and results, para.6).

College and university doors have opened to diverse student populations, bringing about additional challenges in retaining first-year students. Nearly 35% of all first-year students are leaving colleges and universities annually (ACT Institutional Data File, 2008). First-year students face numerous challenges that impact their ability to transition into the higher educational environment. A lack of academic preparedness, academic engagement, and financial concerns all factor into student success. Demographic shifts in the student population bring additional challenges as traditional, adult, minority, low

SES, and first generation students adjust to the higher education culture (Oseguera et al., 2009). These challenges can be negated by supportive and positive institutional experiences (Barefoot, 2000; McGillan 2003). Researchers have agreed that first-year students who use academic advising services, in particular, are more likely to persist than students who do not use those services (Backhus, 1989; Beal & Noel, 1980; Thomas, 1990; Thomas & Minton, 2004).

Academic Advising

Intrusive academic advising has experienced increasing support in advising literature on first-year students (Earl, 1987b; Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Frequency of contact with advisors during the first year enhances the student's sense of 'connectedness' with the institution as well as provides opportunities for advisors to lend decision-making support (Crockett & Levitz, 1984, p.42). Intrusive advising has been found to have a significant negative effect on the intent to leave an institution (Metzner, 1989, p. 404). This section explores the history and theoretical approaches to academic advising as well as the movement towards intrusive academic advising to support diverse college student populations. Current research regarding the influence of intrusive advising on students is examined. This research highlights the positive impact of intrusive advising on grade point average and retention of first-year students (Austin, 1997; McArthur, 2005; Thomas & Minton, 2004).

An Historical Perspective on Academic Advising

Academic advising has been part of higher education for centuries. In the first American colleges, students studied under the auspices of faculty who served as mentors and advisors. This supportive relationship was a central part of the educational process, especially as colleges and universities operated under an in loco parentis model. This model viewed faculty and staff as parental figures while students resided on college campuses. Even as the higher education system further developed and expanded, and students became more independent, academic advisors continued to serve in the role of mentor (Hunter & White, 2004, p.25).

During much of the 20th century academic advising centered on faculty who assumed the mentorship role for student intellectual, ethical and moral development (Habley, 2000). According to Habley (2000), three critical events in the 1970's marked a change in the role of academic advising on college campuses. The first of these events was the publication of articles by Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972). These authors discussed a shift away from advising as a clerical function that involves a prescriptive approach to course selection and scheduling. Secondly, an impending decline in college student enrollment after the wave of baby boomers became apparent. This forced college administrators to investigate ways to better "serve, satisfy, and retain the students they enrolled" (Habley, p.35). Finally, academic advising became recognized as its own professional discipline in the late 1970s when the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) became a national organization and spokesperson for professional advisors in higher education (Habley, p.36).

According to Broadbridge (1996), as student populations changed, two primary advising approaches evolved: a more traditional, prescriptive approach and a developmental approach. The traditional, prescriptive approach to advising is a relationship that is limited to interactions based on course and program requirements, registration, and ensuring students enroll in the correct classes. The advisor-advisee relationship in the prescriptive model is more authoritative and a limited opportunity exists for students to take initiative in their college experience (Broadbridge, 1996, Traditional approach, para.1). In the latter part of the 20th century, advising on many campuses changed from an authoritative relationship to a shared approach where the advisor and advisee work collaboratively to help students reach their educational goals. Through the developmental approach, advising becomes more of a process where the advisor is also concerned with the growth of students along several dimensions. Interactions are not only focused on academic concerns but also on emotional well-being and encouraging students to be more self-analytical. In this model advisors must be knowledgeable about all college or university departments and be able to refer students appropriately (Broadbridge, 1996, Developmental approach, para.1).

In its Statement of Core Values, the National Academic Advising Association describes five beliefs regarding the practical boundaries of academic advising (Creamer, 2000). These beliefs serve as guidelines for why and how academic advising should occur in higher education. According to the Core Values,

First, the purpose of academic advising is student learning and personal development... Second, the art or science of teaching is the pedagogy of academic advising. Teaching methods that employ active or collaborative learning

tactics and that recognize the social nature of learning are more effective... Third, the context of academic advising is educationally compelling circumstances calling for the formation and implementation of educational and life plans... Fourth, the focus of advising is the whole person. Developing realistic plans for students' lives and careers requires a holistic perspective... Fifth, the content of academic advising is constructed knowledge about a students' educational and life plans. (pp. 19-20)

Hunter and White (2004) describe academic advising in a similar fashion. Central to academic advising are discussions about educational goals, helping students understand strengths and weaknesses to meet those goals, and linking students to campus services. Advising is not just about course selections but also involves an ongoing relationship between advisors and students. Advising departments should operate under the standards set by the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) that are endorsed by the National Academic Advising Association (p.22).

The CAS standards were developed by a NACADA taskforce in 1980 that was asked to provide input to the Council regarding goals for academic advising. The taskforce created goals for advising which were revised in 2005 as follows:

1. The primary purpose of the Academic Advising Program (AAP) is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans.
2. AAP must incorporate student learning and student development in its mission. AAP must enhance overall educational experiences.
3. AAP must develop, record, disseminate, implement, and regularly review its mission and goals.
4. The formal education of students is purposeful, holistic, and consists of the curriculum and the co-curriculum. The AAP must identify relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes and provide programs and services that encourage the achievement of those outcomes.
5. Relevant and desirable outcomes include: intellectual growth, effective communication, realistic self-appraisal, enhanced self-esteem, clarified values, career choices, leadership development, healthy behaviors, meaningful interpersonal relations, independence, collaboration, social responsibility, satisfying and productive lifestyles, appreciation of

diversity, spiritual awareness, and achievement of personal and educational goals.

6. AAP must provide evidence of its impact on the achievement of student learning and development outcomes. (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2005)

As student populations continue to change, academic advising has continued to evolve to provide further support to college students. A third approach, intrusive academic advising, was developed to incorporate the techniques used from the prescriptive and developmental models (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Intrusive advising is defined as “intensive advising intervention with an at-risk student that is designed to (a) facilitate informed, responsible decision-making, (b) increase student motivation toward activities in his/her social/academic community, and (c) ensure the probability of the student’s academic success” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, Intrusive Advising Model, para.1). An intrusive approach initiates early contact and helps students develop plans for academic and social improvement (Smith, 2007, p. 814). Intrusive advising helps create relationships that involve shared responsibility, proactive interactions to meet student goals, and encouragement as students transition into college and matriculate through to graduation (Earl, 1987b, p.29).

Theoretical Approaches Impacting Academic Advising

“Students’ needs for advising change with each new plateau of development” (Creamer, 2000, p.29). Therefore, the “effectiveness of academic advising is dependent on the use of multiple theories on student development” (p.18). Developmental theories help explain to advisors the different issues students are facing and provide insight on

how best to respond. Applicable theories center on psychosocial and cognitive development (p.21).

Psychosocial theories typically pertain to identity development in students. They view development as a set of stages or tasks an individual goes through. Included in these stages are “qualitative changes in thinking, feeling, behaving, valuing, and relating to others and oneself” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.2). Theories in this cluster include Marcia’s (1966) model of ego identity status, Josselson’s (1987) identity development in women, and Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of development. Chickering’s vectors “have enabled higher education practitioners to view their students, their courses, and their programs more clearly” (Chickering & Reisser, p.44). Through continued research of the vectors and their application to student experiences, Chickering’s vectors remain an important theoretical perspective in academic advising.

The first of Chickering’s vectors is *developing competence*, which includes intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence. Students are exposed to different frames of reference and begin to understand other points of view, while learning how to listen and communicate effectively. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), “Students’ overall sense of competence increases as they learn to trust their abilities, receive accurate feedback from others, and integrate their skills into a stable self-assurance” (p.46).

The second vector is *managing emotions*. In this stage, students learn appropriate ways to respond to their feelings, manage anger and anxiety, as well as learn how to balance both positive and negative emotions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.46). The

third vector is *moving through autonomy toward interdependence*. The key aspect to this stage is for students to learn how to be self-sufficient and take responsibility for achieving their goals (p.47). The fourth and fifth vectors are *developing mature interpersonal relationships* and *establishing identity*, respectively. This fifth stage is greatly impacted by progress during the first four vectors. Much of how students see themselves is dependent on their level of competence and emotional maturity. It requires a certain amount of self-reflection and determining how they see themselves and how others see them (p.49).

The sixth vector is *developing purpose*, requiring students to be more intentional in determining their goals. At this stage students must take their ideas to a new level by going beyond immediate goals to a larger, more meaningful purpose in life. Goals and action plans should integrate three major elements: “1) vocational plans and aspirations, 2) personal interests, and 3) interpersonal and family commitments” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.50). Finally, the seventh vector is *developing integrity*. This is similar to establishing identity and clarifying purpose but involves three overlapping stages: 1) balancing self interests with others’ interests, 2) affirming self values while respecting those of others, and 3) ensuring those self values are congruent with behavior (p.51). Through the use of identity development theory in advising practices, advisors can assess their students and provide support that more closely reflects their current level of development (Creamer, 2000).

One of the most recognized cognitive development theories is posited by William G. Perry (1968). Even though Perry breaks his theory down into 9 positions, each can be

represented fundamentally by differences in the process of making meaning: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment (Perry, 1968, p.82). Dualism is a tendency to see the world dichotomously-right/wrong, good/bad. Students at this position tend to view faculty and textbooks as the primary sources of knowledge. Information coming from any other source does not serve a purpose (p.83). Multiplicity occurs when students begin to see beyond their faculty and textbooks as having all the right answers and begin considering information from all other sources. However, in this stage, students have an inability to weigh which source is accurate because in their mind all sources are created equal (p.103). Relativism occurs when students are able to determine the most appropriate information by looking at the source, the value of the information, and whether or not the information can be supported (p.152). Commitment to relativism is the final position and occurs when students make choices while considering the context and show evidence of ethical development (p.206).

Perry's theory of cognitive development can help practitioners in a few ways. First, it points "toward ways of identifying and supporting those most vulnerable to culture shock" (Perry, 1968, p.281). The transition into college is a challenging time for many first-year students (Barefoot, 2000; McGillan, 2003). Therefore, by understanding how students view and interpret their surroundings, advisors can more effectively work with students and support their development (Creamer, 2000). Advisors can also use Perry's theory of development (1968) to make predictions on those students who are more open to developmental change and "the extent to which ... achievements and

abilities in the tasks students have mastered are predictive of their aptitude for different intellectual operations” (Perry, 1968, p.282).

“Student development theories provide particularly helpful guidance toward achieving the objective of enhancing student learning and personal development” (Evans et al., 1998, p.273). According to the first statement of the Core Values established by NACADA, the primary purpose of advising is student learning and development (Creamer, 2000, p.19). Therefore, it is essential for academic advisors to have a general understanding of these theories in order to provide the necessary support and guidance for students to be successful and to accomplish their academic goals.

Intrusive Advising

Intrusive advising has become one response to challenges experienced by today’s college student. Earl (1987a) states that, historically, colleges and universities believed the role of higher education was to serve in loco parentis, whereby college personnel assumed the responsibility of parents. Modern universities changed this philosophy by assuming students were responsible for themselves. However, as universities experience nearly 35% dropout rates among first-year students, it has become clear that more support is needed (Barefoot, 2000, p.14). The reason for this shift back to greater support is twofold. College students are primarily late adolescents, who are not attending to adult responsibilities. Due to their inexperience, such things as study skills, motivation, and time management may not be employed to meet the basic requirements of academic success. The second problem faced by today’s college students is that they are facing many developmental tasks, such as developing autonomy and managing emotions.

However, a primary task seen by higher education as leading to success is that of intellectual development, which is often measured by GPA. If students do not meet an institution's academic requirements, usually a C average, they may be removed from this environment (Earl, 1987a).

An intrusive advising model is an intervention that may address these problems. According to Earl (1987b), intrusive advising combines prescriptive advising (including expertise, structured programs, and awareness of student needs), with developmental advising that considers the whole student and his or her needs. Intrusive advising is based on three hypotheses from advising research. First, advisers can be trained to identify students who need assistance with course registration, are having academic difficulty, and/or college adjustment issues (p.29). Second, students do respond to direct contact by an advisor. Not all students will self-refer when they experience a challenge. Therefore, approaching students directly forces them to have some form of interaction with their advisor to discuss their concerns. Finally, students who have difficulties adjusting to the college environment can be taught how to be successful academically. Overall, intrusive advising helps to secure contact between advisors and students, forces students to respond to academic responsibilities, and helps expand advising beyond the registration process (p. 30).

Intrusive advising is a one-on-one, supportive relationship between the advisor and advisee. Advisors see advisees as individuals, needing more than just information about registration and college policies. Essential to the relationship are discussions about life skills and goals, as without consideration of these aspects, the impact of the advisor

will be limited. Intrusive advising takes each student's uniqueness and diversity into account as the advisor works with each student from the beginning of college through to graduation (Thomas & Minton, 2004, *Intrusive Advisement*, para.1).

Thomas and Minton (2004) describe six primary characteristics of intrusive advisors:

- 1) Intrusive advisors must have a deep understanding of the college. They need to know not only what departments are in existence, but also what they can do and how they can provide support to a student.
- 2) Intrusive advisors must also know the staff in each support department. Telling a student to "go see Financial Aid" is not sufficient. Chances are the student will get lost in the process. Advisors must be able to link the department with an individual so the student knows who to specifically ask for. This also gives the advisor the opportunity to speak with that individual prior to the meeting so that the person has a greater understanding of the student's background.
- 3) Intrusive advisors should be trained in all areas that impact a student. They do not need to be as well-versed as those who work in the department, but they should have enough understanding to make educated decisions regarding their students. For example, they should be aware of the financial repercussions of dropping a course.
- 4) Intrusive advisors should be available for both drop-in visits and scheduled appointments.
- 5) Intrusive advisors should always monitor student progress and not rely on receiving information on that progress by only the student. Students may not realize the importance of telling their advisor they dropped a class or may be failing. Getting access to this information, regardless if it comes directly from the student or not, is essential to appropriate advising.
- 6) Intrusive advisors should maintain clear boundaries with their students. The advising relationship is a professional relationship, one that promotes independence while teaching the student about the college and advisement process. (Characteristics of Intrusive Advisors, para.1)

Current Research on Intrusive Advising

"The Forum," a structured, intrusive advising initiative at Michigan State University, provides support to students on academic probation. This program provides students with a venue to discuss how to be effective learners, improve their GPA's, and determine their short- and long-term goals. Students on probation receive a letter at the

beginning of the semester stating they must attend The Forum or meet with their advisor individually (Austin, 1997, p.45). Both surveys and informal conversations with students reported student satisfaction with The Forum and their relief to have been mandated to confront their academic challenges. More importantly, positive results occurred in both cumulative GPA and short-term retention. For students who attended The Forum, who attended both The Forum and an advising session, and those who attended just the advising session, cumulative GPA improvements were 0.578, 0.47, and 0.495 respectively (at end of semester). Students who did not attend any advising event experienced an average 0.34 increase in cumulative GPA. In addition, the semester retention of probationary students who either attended The Forum or the advising session was 69.7% and 68.75%, respectively, compared to a 60.4% retention rate of students who did not attend either. The results of this structured, intrusive advising strategy demonstrate that this approach has a positive impact on the overall success rate of probationary students (p.46).

Emporia State University completed a study of its Student Advising Center (SAC), comparing two student cohorts in 1984 and 1979. During this time period the SAC had been created using an intrusive advising approach, one that had been reported by other researchers as a successful approach to academic advising. Retention of students from freshman through senior year (4 years) was analyzed. It was determined that the 1984 cohort experienced an 8% increase in 4 year retention compared to the 1979 cohort. No other treatment variable existed between these years, so it was assumed that the

intrusive advising approach of the SAC had measurably affected student persistence (Backhus, 1989, p.44).

The Student Success Center at Johan A. Logan College also employs an intrusive advising program. According to institutional data, both retention and graduation rates of students involved in the Center far exceed the campus averages. Research findings support previous research in which advising is seen at the core of successful efforts to educate and retain students (Thomas & Minton, 2004, Student Success Center Outcomes, para.3-4).

An intrusive advising approach has been employed at Old Dominion University with students on academic probation. Students were coached on specific study strategies and assistance to help improve their academic performance (GPA). A statistically significant improvement was found over three semesters in both grades and retention (Earl, 1987b, p.31). Earl states that “intrusive advising has been shown to improve the effectiveness of advising, enhance academic skills, and increase retention” (p.28).

Lopez, Yanez, Clayton, and Thompson (1988) discussed the impact of intrusive advising on special student populations at Central Washington University. Intrusive advising at CWU required professional advisors to take active roles in seeking contact with students, rather than waiting for students to contact them. Through the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), a program for academically challenged individuals, students were required to sign admission agreements that stipulated their involvement in intrusive advising. This agreement included two weekly meetings with peer advisors and one weekly meeting with a professional advisor during the first quarter. Meetings were

working sessions that focused on class assignments and study skills. Students were also required to enroll in a study skills class taught by an EOP advisor (Lopez et al., 1988, p.196). Over the six years of the study, the academic performance of EOP students paralleled those in the University as a whole. Even though there was almost a one point difference between high school GPA's (2.15 EOP and 3.10 University), the difference decreased dramatically at the end of the first year (2.40 EOP, 2.45 University). In addition, the first-year retention rate of EOP students exceeded those for the University (range of 70-85% EOP, 62% University). Overall, intrusive advising was found to be a successful method at improving academic performance and retention of first-year students (p.197).

Western New Mexico University also began an intrusive advising program when enrollment began to decline and the university realized it was losing 66% of the freshman class and 35% of sophomores. Based on an evaluation of attrition, students were disinclined to seek out college services and had not received personal attention. Therefore, the university began requiring first-year advising that included multiple meetings throughout the year (Glennen & Baxley, 1985, p.11). Through the intrusive advising program, first-year attrition dropped from 66% to 48% in its first year and from 48% to 25% in the second year (p.12). In addition, first-year students completed a greater number of credit hours and students who entered the university with a low ACT score and were enrolled at the end of their first semester increased by 27% (p.13).

Academic advising has been part of the higher education culture for centuries. It has evolved from a prescriptive to a developmental to a more integrated approach in

advising diverse student populations. Intrusive advising, an integrated approach, has been employed in academic probation programs and in student advising centers at many colleges and universities. Advising research provides quantitative data demonstrating the positive impact of intrusive advising on grade point average and retention of first-year students. While these are useful measures in demonstrating the efficacy of intrusive advising, they provide only part of the picture. A more comprehensive understanding of the value of intrusive advising can be obtained through qualitative research. Through the use of qualitative measures, the social settings in which intrusive advising is embedded, can be better understood.

Self Efficacy Beliefs

Research on self efficacy beliefs in academic settings is abundant. Bandura's (1977, 1986) initial analyses on the topic set the tone for researchers to continue the investigation into how this variable impacts such things as academic performance, retention, and goal setting. This review of the literature examines Bandura's definition and perspectives on self efficacy beliefs. It explains the influential factors that work together to form self efficacy: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state. In addition, it highlights some of the numerous studies that have demonstrated a positive relationship between self efficacy and academic performance.

Self Efficacy Defined

Bandura (1986) defined self efficacy as a "judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p.391). Positive judgments

encourage active engagement in activities that contribute to further growth of competencies as well as reinforce those judgments. Self efficacy also determines how much effort is expended and how long someone will persist in the face of difficulty. It contributes to the development of new skills and new behavior patterns (pp. 394-395).

Four primary sources of self efficacy information influence personal beliefs: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, physiological state, and verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Enactive attainment is the most influential source because it is based on mastery of skills. "Success raises efficacy appraisals; repeated failures lower them, especially if the failures occur early in the course of events and do not reflect lack of effort or adverse external circumstances" (Bandura, 1986, p.399). Vicarious experience is similar to the concept of observational learning in that by seeing other, similar people perform successfully, and this enhances one's views that he or she too can perform the same. People also rely on information regarding their physiological state in judging their capabilities. "They read their somatic arousal in stressful or taxing situations as ominous signs of vulnerability to dysfunction" (p.401). People are more likely to expect success when this arousal is limited.

Verbal persuasion is the fourth information source for self efficacy and is the focus of this research. "Verbal persuasion is widely used to try to talk people into believing they possess capabilities that will enable them to achieve what they seek... it can contribute to successful performance if the heightened appraisal is within realistic bounds" (Bandura, 1986, p.400). Verbal persuasion can increase self efficacy judgments and promote the development of new skills. The self appraisal that influences self

efficacy beliefs is based on the opinions of others who “possess evaluative competence” (p.405). How credible and knowledgeable these individuals are perceived to be determine the impact of their opinions. Therefore, these opinions are only as strong as the recipient’s confidence in the people giving them. According to Bandura (1986), “those who are persuaded they can succeed are more likely to expend the necessary effort than if they are troubled by uncertainties” (Bandura, 1986, p.406).

Self efficacy focuses on performance capabilities rather than on personal capabilities. It contains a more future focus and should relate to activities that people will perform rather than on those already performed. It is multi-dimensional; therefore beliefs may differ based on the particular area that is being measured. This multidimensionality means that people can have high self efficacy beliefs for math skills, yet low beliefs for writing skills. It differs from measures of self concept, which relate more to self esteem reactions rather than task-specific performance judgments (Zimmerman, 2000, p.84).

Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) explain self efficacy similarly. Specific judgments of self efficacy beliefs are more closely related to student engagement and learning than self concept. Self efficacy relates to particular goals and judgments of abilities to accomplish or perform those goals. It can also have a cyclical effect in that the actual achievement of goals (which was originally impacted by self efficacy) flows back to self efficacy over time. Therefore, current beliefs are partly based on past performance (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, pp.122-123).

The amount of research on self processes has become abundant in the past few decades. According to Bandura (1991), the reason for this growth is because of the impact of self influences on the selection and construction of environments.

The impact of most environmental influences on human motivation, affect, and actions is heavily mediated through self processes. They give meaning and valence to external events... People make causal contributions to their own functioning through mechanisms of personal agency. Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. (Bandura, 2001, p. 118)

Self efficacy beliefs impact how people create and rehearse life events. Those with high self efficacy beliefs visualize successful scenarios that positively guide and support their actions. Those with low self efficacy beliefs visualize unsuccessful or negative scenarios and tend to focus on what could go wrong. When dealing with these thoughts and feelings, it can become very difficult to seek and develop personal goals (Bandura, 2001, p. 118). Therefore, self efficacy impacts motivation by influencing the goals people set for themselves, the effort put into meeting those goals, and how long they persist when faced with adversity (p.131).

Accomplishments are also impacted by self efficacy beliefs. Even though people may possess the skills needed to accomplish particular tasks, if they do not also possess positive self efficacy beliefs, they are more likely to perform poorly. Fluctuations in self efficacy beliefs impact performance (Bandura, 2001, p.119).

How performance is socially evaluated also impacts self efficacy. Performance feedback that focuses on what has been accomplished has a more positive impact than

feedback focusing on what was not accomplished, highlighting personal deficiencies.

“Learning environments that construe ability as an acquirable skill, deemphasize competitive social comparison, and highlight self-comparison of progress and personal accomplishments are well suited for building a sense of efficacy that promotes academic achievement” (Bandura, 2001, p. 125).

From a larger perspective, self efficacy beliefs shape the course lives take by influencing choices and decisions made by people. People avoid situations in which they do not feel they can be successful and undertake more challenging situations if they feel they can be successful. “Any factor that influences choice behavior can profoundly affect the direction of personal development” (Bandura, 2001, p.135). Therefore, creating environments that promote positive self efficacy beliefs are of the utmost importance.

Self Efficacy and Academic Achievement

Hseigh, Sullivan and Guerra (2007) proposed that students with more confidence are more likely to persist in college. Students not only need to have the ability to acquire the skills to be academically successful, they also need to have the belief that they can perform well academically. To examine this belief, they compared self-efficacy beliefs and goals toward learning in two student groups: students in good academic standing (GPA is equal to or above 2.0) and students not in good academic standing (GPA below 2.0) (p.456). Specifically, they considered 1) how well do student academic self-efficacy and goal orientation scores predict achievement, and 2) are successful and unsuccessful students (as defined above) different in terms of their self-efficacy levels and if so, how do they differ in terms of their goal orientations (p.459).

Three goal orientations were considered: mastery goals, in which students “pursue their competence by developing and improving their ability, performance-approach goals, where learners are concerned about demonstrating their ability, and performance avoidance goals, where students’ main concern is hiding their lack of ability” (p. 458).

Their results indicated that GPA was positively correlated with self-efficacy and mastery goal orientation, .36 and .40 respectively. Grade point average was negatively correlated with performance-avoidance goal orientation (-.35) (Hseigh et al., 2007, p.462). In addition, self-efficacy was higher for students in good academic standing and lower for those students not in good academic standing. Among those students who had higher self-efficacy beliefs but were in poor academic standing, they were found to have higher performance avoidance goals. Therefore, they were more apt to avoid challenging tasks yet seek help when faced with academic difficulties.

This study supports the hypothesis that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic achievement, as well as highlights the importance of goal orientation. The authors suggest that educators should not only know their students’ self-efficacy beliefs, but also monitor their goal orientations and help their students develop more adaptive goals that will help them to successfully complete college (Hseigh et al., 2007, p.467).

The relationship between self efficacy beliefs and academic success and persistence was also examined by Lent, Brown, and Larkin (1984). They examined these variables with students who were participating in a 10-week career exploration course, surveying the students three times: before, at the end, and two months after completion. In addition to the completion of a survey measuring level of self efficacy, students rated

themselves regarding degree of self confidence in their ability (strength) to complete the educational requirements of their degree program. Strength was measured on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 (completely unsure) to 10 (completely sure) (p. 357). The researchers found high level self efficacy and high strength students persisted for all quarters of their program. Students who reported lower levels of self efficacy and of strength in confidence persisted at 58% and 50%, respectively. Higher grades and general academic outcome were achieved by students with higher levels of self efficacy (3.15 GPA compared to 2.73 GPA) and confidence (3.17 GPA compared to 2.61 GPA) (p.359). Their findings indicate that self efficacy may be an important cognitive factor related to academic behavior in the students they studied.

Lent, Brown, and Larkin (1987) further examined self efficacy beliefs, along with interest congruence and consequence thinking, in accounting for academic performance (grades), persistence in technical majors, perceived career options, and career indecision. Using a similar sample as their previous study (Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984), they surveyed freshman and sophomore students in a 10-week career planning course. Regression analyses were completed to determine the contribution of each of the three variables (self efficacy, interest congruence, and consequence thinking). Their analysis found that only self efficacy added predictive variance for academic achievement/grades. Both self efficacy and interest congruence were found to have significant predictive variance to perceived career options, with self efficacy being the stronger predictor (p.295). Correlations between the variables were also assessed. While considering self efficacy and consequence thinking, there was a positive correlation between self efficacy

and positive consequences ($r = .25$) and a negative correlation between self efficacy and negative consequences ($r = -.24$) (p.295). This study supported their previous finding of a positive relationship between self efficacy and academic performance, as well as the added component that self efficacy beliefs are also associated with how positive or negative students view the outcomes (consequences) they considered for their major.

Fenollar, Roman, and Cuestas (2005) performed a similar study considering academic self efficacy beliefs, goals of learning (mastery, performance approach, performance avoidance and work avoidance) and their association with academic performance. Their study surveyed 553 university students in different majors (p. 874). Only mastery goals were found to have a positive effect on academic performance through “deep processing and effort” (p. 884). In addition, self efficacy had the strongest positive effect on academic performance. The role of self efficacy in student development and the use of academic competencies, such as deep processing, were positively related. Their findings suggest “the confidence that students have in their own capability helps determine what they do with the knowledge and skills they possess” (p.885).

Boulter (2002) acknowledged the importance of understanding the forces that influence academic adjustment in the first year of college. To do this, 12 self-concept domains and 5 social support domains were compared with GPA's of freshman students at a small private liberal arts college. Data were collected using the Self-Perception Profile for College Students, which is a self-report survey comprised of subscales to measure the specific domains. Using multiple regression analyses, the study found that

academic average was significantly related to student self-perception of academic ability (Boulter, 2002, Results, para.1).

The self-perception of intellectual ability was a positive influence on adjustment in college for both men and women, as predicted. This result is consistent with earlier findings (Ratcliff, 1991; Tinto, 1993) in which students who have confidence in their intellectual ability, set high educational and occupational goals for themselves, and believe that they have the ability to meet these goals, were predicted to successfully adjust to the academic demands of college (Boulter, 2002, Discussion para. 2).

Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) examined the joint effect of academic self-efficacy and stress on academic performance for immigrant and minority college freshmen. To do this, they developed a survey that related academic self efficacy and stress on 27 college-related tasks. Both scales were found to have high internal reliability. Factor analyses were performed for each scale and in both instances, each factored into four components: interaction at school, performance in class, performance out of class, and managing work, family, and school. More specifically, their results found academic self efficacy to have a "...strong, positive effect on freshman grades and credits... In fact, self-efficacy is the single strongest predictor of GPA, even taking into account high school academic performance and demographic background variables" (Zajacova et al., 2005, p. 696). There was little association found between socio-demographic variables, age or sex with academic outcomes. Overall, this study supports the important role academic self efficacy beliefs have in predicting academic success in college (p. 697).

A more multi-faceted view of self efficacy and its relationship to college student course performance was examined by Bong (2001). In this study both self-efficacy and task value in predicting course performance was explored. The uniqueness of the study was in the assessment of multiple self efficacy variables of different specificity (Bong, 2001, p.555). These measures included: self efficacy for self-regulated learning, self efficacy for academic achievement, course-specific self efficacy, content-specific self efficacy, and problem-specific self efficacy. Data were collected four times during the course of a semester through the use of surveys. The analysis found that all of the self efficacy perceptions were positively interrelated with each other. Correlations between any two of the self efficacy variables were found to decrease as differences in their measurement levels increased. For example, self efficacy for regulated learning and self efficacy for academic achievement had one of the highest correlations ($r = .55$). However, when comparing either of these more general self efficacy variables to more problem specific ones, those correlations decreased (average $r = .32$) (p.559). This finding demonstrates that student self efficacy beliefs are differentiated by their levels of specificity. Students are able to discriminate between the different self efficacy variables and may use different environmental cues when arriving at each perception (Bong, 2001).

The importance of academic self efficacy as a key factor in the success of high school to university transitions was highlighted by Chemer, Hu, and Garcia (2001). Their study considered academic self efficacy, optimism, and challenge-threat evaluation of first-year students after completing their first quarter of college. It was hypothesized that academic self efficacy would have a significant impact on academic performance and

personal adjustment. Questionnaires were sent to all first-year students that included questions on the three variables: academic self efficacy, optimism, and challenge-threat evaluation (academic work is perceived to be either a challenge or threat) (Chemer et al., 2001, p.57). A significant and direct effect between academic self efficacy and academic performance was found (standardized coefficient = .34, $p < .001$). Students with higher academic self efficacy beliefs were also found to perceive academic work as more of a challenge (challenge-threat evaluation), have greater academic expectations, and better academic performance. Less stress, fewer health problems, and better overall adjustment to college life was also related to higher academic self-efficacy beliefs (p.60).

Multon, Brown, and Lent (1991) completed a meta-analysis of the relationships between self efficacy beliefs and academic performance and persistence. The initial sample produced 68 published and unpublished papers. "To be included in the meta-analyses, a study had to provide the following: (a) a measure of self efficacy, (b) a measure of academic performance or persistence, and (c) sufficient information to calculate appropriate effect size estimates" (Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991, p.31). Following these guidelines, a final set of 39 studies was included. Subjects in the studies ranged from elementary school children to college students, with college students comprising 28.9% of the population. Nineteen different measures of academic performance were used, but after further investigation the measures were coded into three categories: standardized achievement tests, classroom related measures (grades, cumulative grade point average), and basic skill tasks (p.32). The investigation supported the hypotheses of the relationships of self efficacy beliefs to academic performance and

persistence. “Effect size estimates in both meta-analyses (.38 for performance and .34 for persistence) suggest that, across various types of student samples, designs, and criterion measures, self efficacy beliefs account for approximately 14% of the variance in students’ academic performance and approximately 12% of the variance in their persistence” (p.34). In addition, they found that a stronger relationship between self efficacy and academic performance existed for low-achieving students ($r = .56$) compared to students with more average academic progress ($r = .33$) (p. 35).

Research on self efficacy in academic settings is abundant. According to Bandura (1986), four primary sources of self efficacy information influence personal beliefs: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, physiological state, and verbal persuasion. As self efficacy beliefs are enhanced through these sources, a link between academic self efficacy and academic performance has been demonstrated. In addition, the importance of academic self efficacy as a key factor in the success of high school-to-university transition as well as retention was highlighted (Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001; Hseigh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007). Through a greater understanding of how academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students are impacted by intrusive advising strategies, components of first-year experience programs that impact student success can be determined.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted three interconnected themes in higher education: the challenges facing first-year students, the use of intrusive academic advising in providing academic support to students, and the role of self-efficacy in predicting academic success.

Nearly 35% of first-year students do not begin their sophomore year (Barefoot, 2000). Although first-year experience programs have been created at many institutions, it is clear that further support is needed to support students in the transition into college. Academic advisors are many times the first contact first-year students make within an institution. Advisors may be better positioned than others to provide a supportive relationship to first-year students and provide them with encouragement to influence their self efficacy (McGillan, 2003). Three primary approaches to advising exist: prescriptive, developmental, and a more integrated approach, intrusive academic advising (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The intrusive approach combines the strengths of both approaches, providing the structured format of the prescriptive approach and considering the development of the whole person from the developmental approach. As student populations have changed, intrusive advising has been developed to create relationships that involve shared responsibility, proactive interactions to meet student goals, and encouragement (Earl, 1987b, p.29). Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between intrusive academic advising and improved academic performance. However research on intrusive academic advising has been more quantitative in nature, focusing primarily on its influence on grade point average and retention. A gap in the literature exists on the quality of the relationship formed between students and advisors and the impact of this relationship on students. What is it about the intrusive advising relationship that impacts grade point average and/or retention?

Self efficacy has also been determined to have a positive effect on academic performance. Higher grades and general academic outcomes have been associated with

students possessing higher levels of academic self efficacy and confidence (Hseigh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1987). Research has demonstrated the importance of academic self efficacy as a key factor in the success of high school to university transitions (Chemer, Hu & Garcia, 2001; Ratcliffe, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Since both academic self efficacy and intrusive advising have been shown to positively impact academic performance, the question is then raised regarding the relationship between these two variables for first-year students.

Chapter III describes the methodology for a mixed methods study that seeks to supplement the literature with data from first-year students enrolled at a university employing intrusive academic advising. As stated previously, qualitative interviews along with quantitative self efficacy data address the following questions:

1. What are first-year college student expectations for the intrusive academic advising experience that they anticipate receiving during their first term of enrollment?
2. To what extent do academic self efficacy perceptions of first-year students engaged in an intrusive academic advising program change during their first term of enrollment?
3. What do first-year students believe makes an impact on their academic self efficacy beliefs during their first term?
4. To what extent and in what ways do first-year college students believe the quality of their intrusive academic advising experiences contribute to their transition into the academic life of their institution?

Results from an academic self efficacy survey combined with the academic advising experiences of first-year students during the first term of enrollment, allow for a more thorough consideration of the impact of intrusive academic advising

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

First-year retention rates among higher education undergraduates over the past several years have increased minimally despite numerous improvement efforts (Barefoot, 2000; Tinto, 2004). High numbers of first-year students are leaving college due to insufficient academic skills, inabilities to adjust to the academic and social life of college, as well as having a limited commitment to the goal of completing college (Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Tinto, 1987). Researchers agree that programs which provide strategies to improve the transition from high school to college and that help develop skills to facilitate academic success are needed for first-year students (Barefoot, 2000; Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Tinto, 2004). These programs may include providing students with academic advising that targets goal-setting and developing high self efficacy beliefs. Additional research is needed to inform intervention programs that can lead to academic success for first-year students (Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007).

The present study provides further insight into the impact of an intrusive advising approach on the academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. First-year students at a four-year, private institution were interviewed at the beginning and end of the first term to explore the advisor-student relationship. Questions explored student expectations for college and the advising relationship and examined how the expectations compare with

student experiences in the first term of enrollment. In conjunction with the interviews, students completed the College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) (Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel & Davis, 1993). The data gathered from the interviews, along with survey results, provided further insight into the extent to which academic self efficacy changed during the first term and if the advising relationship was an influential factor in measured changes. Through this multi-dimensional analysis, methods that can enhance first-year experience programs were examined.

Rationale for Using a Mixed Methods Research Design

Mixed methods research is a type of research in which both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are combined for the “broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p.123). The methodology employed in this research is guided by the *fundamental principle of mixed research* (Johnson & Turner, 2003). According to this principle, researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies in such a way that the combination encourages complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Johnson & Turner, 2003). The end product may be superior to mono-method studies (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2004).

Campbell and Fiske (1959) can be credited as formalizing the practice of using multiple research methods and introducing the idea of triangulation. Triangulation occurs when more than one method is used as part of the validation process to help ensure the variance is due to the variable under study, rather than the method employed. Denzin

(1978) elaborated on different methods of triangulation, including the between-methods approach which involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Through this approach, the bias inherent in one particular data source may be canceled out and “the result will be a convergence upon the truth about some social phenomenon” (Denzin, 1978, p.14).

Morse (1991) described two types of methodological triangulation: simultaneous and sequential. Simultaneous triangulation occurs when quantitative and qualitative methods are used simultaneously but with limited interaction during the data collection stage. Sequential triangulation is utilized when the results of one method is used in the planning of the next method. In this research, the interview and the questionnaire occur concurrently, therefore creating simultaneous triangulation.

During the data analysis stage, the triangulated data can provide a rich description and investigation.

...quantitative data can facilitate the generalizability of the qualitative data and shed new light on qualitative findings. Alternatively, during the data analysis stage, qualitative data can play an important role by interpreting, clarifying, describing, and validating quantitative results. (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 115)

In the present study, a mixed methods approach was best suited to gather data that examined the advisor-student relationship and the degree of academic self efficacy. The broader context of the advisor-student relationship is a major focus of this research. A qualitative approach that explored this relationship helped identify the conditions under which this relationship occurred. Through the use of personal interviews, the individual

experiences of each student were explored. Exploring advisor-student relationships, and the influence of those relationships, lend itself well to the use of a qualitative approach.

Research on academic self efficacy beliefs is abundant. Much of the research has utilized questionnaires to provide a quantitative measurement of the extent or degree of self efficacy beliefs held by students. Utilizing this approach for measuring academic self efficacy has enabled researchers to validate their findings as well as correlate the measurement to other variables (Fenollar, Roman & Cuestas, 2005; Hseigh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984, 1987).

“Mixed methods research offers great promise for practicing researchers who would like to see methodologies describe and develop techniques that are closer to what researchers actually use in practice” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15). The primary focus of this research was to determine the potential impact of the “practice” of intrusive advising on first-year students. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the experiences and viewpoints of students were more accurately identified. Combining the qualitative data with the quantitative results from the CSEI provided a between-methods triangulation to provide greater insight into the relationship between the three variables as well as helped to negate biases in the methodology employed or the researcher’s analysis of the findings.

Grounded Theory

The grounded theory approach was used in the collection and interpretation of data. Researchers use grounded theory methods to study individual processes and interpersonal relations (Smith, 2003). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded

theory is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from research. Core components of this approach are analytic categories developed while studying the data rather than preconceived hypotheses (Smith, 2003). The role of theory is to “enable prediction and explanation of behavior” and “to be usable in practical applications - prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.3). Theory generated by data can not be refuted by more data or replaced by another theory because it is too intimately linked with data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory methodology was most appropriate for this research because it provided a strategy to gather and interpret data relative to student experience and the perception of the “practice” of intrusive advising. Comparable research has employed this methodology. Gofen (2009) used a grounded theory approach by employing semi-structured interviews to analyze the role of family for first-generation college students. Thompson (2008) also utilized grounded theory methodology to understand how academic support is communicated between first-year students. Similarly, Ritzhaupt, Singh, Seyferth, and Dedrick (2008) employed descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and qualitative analysis using grounded theory to measure student perspectives.

A grounded theory approach for this research allowed for the use of inductive strategies while analyzing qualitative data from student interviews and quantitative results of the CSEI.

In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. The evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond a

doubt (nor is it even in studies concerned only with accuracy), but the concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 23)

According to Pajares (1996), the direction of self efficacy research should now include strategies that examine and “provide practical, relevant, and theoretical insights” (p. 563).

Research Design

A mixed methods approach was used in this research to examine the potential relationship between intrusive academic advising and academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. This methodology helped to identify the conditions under which the advisor-student relationship occurred and explored the individual experiences of each student.

Site Selection and Access

The university selected for this research is a mid-size, not-for-profit, multi-campus university in the Midwest. The institution was selected because of its long-standing intrusive advising approach for first-year students and the diversity of the student population. It enrolls less than 10,000 students annually, in both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Approximately half of the student body is enrolled at the main campus, and the remaining half is distributed among its branch campuses. The branch campus selected for this study has a student population that mirrors institutional demographics and is the second oldest and more established of the branch campuses. Permission to conduct this research was granted by the Provost of the University.

Access to the student population initially occurred through a senior director at the branch campus. This individual had no immediate connection to the students. The

director contacted the student sample via email and mail (discussed further below) and invited participation in the study. An Invitation to Participate (see Appendix A) was included in the mailings. Students that expressed interest in participating in the study were informed to contact the researcher directly for further information. Therefore, the Director was not aware of which students did or did not agree to participate.

Population

The ethnic/racial composition of the undergraduate student population was 41.39% Caucasian/Other, 32.94% African-American, 22.68% Hispanic, and 2.98% Asian. Males comprised 38.17% and females comprised 61.83% of the student body, while the age breakdown was 40.11%, 31.63%, and 28.26% for 18-20, 21-25, and 26+ years of age, respectively. The first-year student population was comparable in ethnicity and gender. The age breakdown differed in that 45.62% of first-year students were between 18-20 years of age, 29.11% between 21-25 years, and 25.27% were aged 26 or older. Approximately 60% of the student population was first-generation college students and over 90% of the students received some form of financial aid.

Sampling Criteria

Due to the qualitative component of this study, a purposeful sampling method was utilized. “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p.88). According to Maxwell (2005), there are at least four goals that purposeful sampling can achieve: 1) representativeness of the individuals selected, 2) adequately capture the heterogeneity in a population by defining the

dimensions of variation that are relevant to a study, 3) deliberately examine the population that is critical for theory to be developed, and 4) establish particular comparisons to highlight the reasons for differences between participants.

A sample of 50 students was identified at the branch campus for possible participation in the study. Students were first-time, first-year students. Having no prior experience in higher education was a critical component in considering support structures that aid in the transition into college. Diversity of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major that reflects the first-year student population at the university was considered in the sampling selection. The liaison (Director of Administration) generated a list of names of students who met the given criteria using an Institutional Research report. The liaison sent a letter and an email to the students, indicating they should contact the researcher directly if they were interested in participating in the study (see Appendix A). Only 8 students contacted the researcher, therefore all were included in the study.

Obtaining Informed Consent

Obtaining informed consent from students in this study was crucial for the participants to have an ethical right to make an informed decision whether to participate or not participate in the study. The American Psychological Association's Code of Ethics sets forth the core values of conducting research. According to APA, "Through the process of becoming informed, the client receives information on which to base a considered decision; through the process of obtaining consent, the psychologist ensures that the decision to proceed belongs to the client and is not the product of coercion" (Behnke, 2004, p. 80).

The consent form for this study (see Appendix B) was formatted according to Loyola University Chicago IRB standards. It provided broad information such as the researcher's contact information, the nature and purpose of the study, and the specific information regarding the structure of the study. Students were notified that participation in this study would not impact their academic standing at the university in any way. Names of participants were kept confidential at all times. Participants were asked to provide their preferred method of contact, whether email or by phone. Participant contact information was stored in the home of the researcher and will be discarded after two years of completion of the research study. Audiotapes were held on a secure network and after two years, all surveys, audiotapes, and interview notes will be discarded.

In an effort to be thorough, the consent form was one of three documents offering information about the study. The Invitation to Participate (see Appendix A), sent as part of the initial email to potential participants, discussed many of the central elements of the study. The third document was the Synopsis of the Research Study (Appendix C), which outlined the goals of the study and the methods in which data would be collected. These three documents provided the information necessary for students to make an informed decision regarding participation in this study.

The liaison mailed the Invitation to Participate during the first week of enrollment to potential participants. A similar email, including the Invitation to Participate, was sent during the first week of enrollment as well. Interested students were notified to contact the researcher directly by the end of the first week of the term. The researcher provided the Synopsis of the Research Study and responded to student questions. At the initial

meeting, prior to data collection, the researcher presented the Informed Consent form to the student and obtained their written consent to participate.

Instrumentation

Due to the mixed methods approach to this research, both semi-structured interviews and the College Self Efficacy Inventory were employed in examining the relationship between intrusive academic advising and academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. This combination allowed for a multi-dimensional process for gathering data.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Through guided, semi-structured interviews, the individual experiences of students were explored. Semi-structured interviewing is based on an “interview guide” that contains a list of questions or topics that need to be addressed. The order of questions may vary in order to maintain a conversational environment. Through the use of the guide, interviews provide more “reliable, comparable qualitative data” (Bernard, 1994, p.210). Similar studies of college students using grounded theory methodology have used semi-structured interviews to gather reliable data (Gofen, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Students may respond to self efficacy surveys with more socially desirable responses. Therefore, interviews allowed for “more contextual and thus more honest responses” (Chowdhury & Shahabuddin, 2007, Implications, para. 2).

Semi-structured interviewing has much of the same benefits as unstructured interviewing. There is minimal control over the participant’s responses and through the ideas or questions posed, respondents are able to open up and express themselves in their

own terms (Bernard, 1994). It is best used when the number of interview opportunities is limited (Bernard, 1994). According to Maxwell (2005), a semi-structured interview approach helps the researcher to focus on a particular phenomenon and compare data across individuals (see Appendix D and E). Two interviews were conducted in this research study. The first interview occurred within the first 2 weeks of the term, the second interview occurred upon completion of the first term of enrollment.

College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI)

The quantitative part of this study primarily addressed research question 2: To what extent did the academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students change during the first term? Self efficacy was measured using the CSEI (Solberg et. al., 1993). The use of a published self efficacy measure was desirable given the extent of self efficacy research. Using a “college” self efficacy measure as opposed to a general self efficacy measure supported Bandura’s (1997) findings that self efficacy is context-specific. Permission to utilize this survey was granted by the authors (Solberg et. al., 1993).

The College Self Efficacy Inventory consists of “20 items measuring one’s confidence to perform various academic tasks associated with college success” (Solberg, Gusavec, Hamann, Felch, Johnson, Lamborn & Torres, 1998). College self-help manuals were reviewed to develop the items, producing a pool of 40 items. A team of six experts rated each item and agreed on 20 items for inclusion in the inventory. Using a 9-point Likert scale, students rate their confidence on three subscales: course self efficacy, social self efficacy, and roommate self efficacy. To establish convergent and discriminant validity a principal component analysis was conducted with the three subscales and other

scales associated with college adjustment. Results indicated that self efficacy loaded with other college adjustment indicators. “Internal consistency estimates were used to establish reliability, and coefficient alpha estimates were .93 for the total scale and .88 for each subscale” (Solberg et al., 1998, p.56). Subsequent studies produced similar coefficient alphas, indicating strong reliability for internal consistency (DeWitz & Walsh, 2002; Zajacova, Lynch & Epenshade, 2005). Since the present study considered academic self efficacy, only the course self efficacy and social self efficacy subscales were used for this study. Zajacova, Lynch, and Epenshade (2005) and Irwin (2008) only used these same two subscales from the CSEI, asserting that not all of the questions pertained to their research. As is the case with this research, roommate self efficacy does not apply because the student population was comprised of commuter students and the focus was more academic than social in nature (see Appendix F).

Data Collection

The use of multiple methods to collect data “will broaden, thicken, and deepen the interpretive base of any study” (Denzin, 1989, p.247). The two methods of data collection are described below. Used in combination, the methods provided for a more thorough understanding of the impact of intrusive advising on academic self efficacy beliefs.

College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI)

Students completed a paper version of the CSEI immediately prior to the first and second interview (see Appendix F). Steps were taken to numerically code the inventory results to ensure the identity of the respondent was kept confidential yet was still able to be comparatively analyzed with the interview. Upon completion, survey data was

analyzed using Minitab 14 (Minitab, Inc.) for further analysis. Mean scores were calculated for each subscale to determine the confidence rating for academic-course self efficacy and academic-social self efficacy. Confidence ratings corresponded to the Likert scale categories (i.e., 5 = somewhat confident; 6 = confident).

Semi-Structured Interviews

A personal interview was conducted with each student immediately following completion of the CSEI. The initial interview occurred during the first two weeks of the first term of enrollment. The primary focus of this interview was to explore student expectations about advising and their academic work at the onset of the college experience. Students had minimal contact with an advisor and the college environment prior to this point. The second interview was conducted upon completion of the first term, prior to student receipt of final course grades. According to Bandura (2001) and Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), self efficacy has a cyclical effect in that once feedback is provided, the feedback can further influence self efficacy beliefs. Therefore, it was important to collect data prior to students receiving final grades.

Interviews were tape-recorded to capture student responses in their entirety. According to Smith (2003), tape-recording is a necessary component to semi-structured interviews. If interviews are not tape-recorded, the researcher runs the risk that important nuances may be missed since only the main points are captured. In addition, if the researcher is attempting to write down everything that is said during the interview, it will be harder to establish rapport with the participants and the interview will not flow smoothly. Bernard (1994) supports this position as well, stating that a tape-recorder

should be used in all cases, except for when the interviewee specifically asks the researcher not to record.

Tape-recorded interviews were critical for analysis of the responses. However, they are not a "...complete 'objective' record. Non-verbal behavior is excluded, and the recording still requires a process of interpretation" of the interview (Smith, 2003, p.64). A tape should never completely substitute for note taking. "Take notes during the interview *about* the interview. Did the informant seem nervous or evasive? Were there a lot of interruptions? What were the physical surroundings like? How much probing did you have to do" (Bernard, 1994, p.224)? Notes provide the context of the interview responses that can not be reflected in a tape-recording. Wisker (2007) also recommends that notes and transcriptions be completed as soon as possible after the interview in order to help contextualize the responses. Therefore, in addition to the tape-recording of interviews, this researcher took notes that highlighted nonverbal behaviors, such as expressions and body language, helping to provide the full context of the individual responses.

An experienced transcriber completed semi-verbatim transcriptions, omitting false starts, uhms, ahs, and other sentence fillers that did not change the meaning of what was said. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure strict confidentiality of the data files and transcripts (see Appendix G).

First interview. The primary goal of the first interview was to establish rapport and to determine student expectations for the advising relationship, the college experience, and academic self efficacy beliefs. The interview followed an outline

recommended by Wisker (2007): introductions, social comments about time and place, background information to the interview and how it will be conducted, the interview questions, winding down and providing information about the use of the information provided, and lastly, closing down through thanks and goodbyes (p.199). During the interview, it was also important to allow time and space for responses to be developed, to probe if the responses seemed to be moving in a useful direction, to paraphrase responses to ensure accuracy, and to create formal movements to and from questions to ensure each question was addressed (Wisker, 2007).

The role of the researcher was to “facilitate and guide, rather than dictate exactly what will happen during the encounter” (Smith, 2003, p.62). The interview did not follow the sequence of questions exactly, especially if it was appropriate to ask a question earlier than it appeared on the schedule because it followed something the respondent had said. The wording of each question changed slightly, depending on how the researcher felt the student was responding (Smith, 2003). In keeping with the recommendations from other researchers (Bernard, 1994; Smith, 2003; Wisker, 2007), several questions were developed for the first interview (see Appendix D). Each question was developed to address this study’s research questions.

Second interview. A core component of grounded theory is the simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis. Analysis of data shapes future data collection (Smith, 2003). Although preliminary questions for the second interview were based on the research questions, the questions were refined as data from the first interview and CSEI had been analyzed (see Appendix E). Similar questions relating to academic self

efficacy in the first interview were repeated in the second interview. This provided an opportunity to evaluate student perceptions of changes in academic self efficacy during the first term of enrollment from quantitative and qualitative viewpoints.

Post-interview transcript management. To facilitate the production of rich, detailed data in grounded theory studies, it was important to have simultaneous involvement in data gathering and analysis (Smith, 2003). Therefore, interview tapes were listened to immediately following the interview. While listening to the tapes, the researcher wrote down additional notes on what was heard in the data and began to develop initial ideas about categories and relationships (Maxwell, 2005).

A thick description of the relationships within the data is obtained by “compiling detailed narratives of experiences (such as transcribed tapes of interviews)... Transcribed tape recordings of interviews provide details for nuanced views and reviews of data” (Smith, 2003, p.87). Studying the transcribed tape-recordings, as well as the notes regarding the context of the interviews, provided greater insights into themes found within the respondents’ feedback (Maxwell, 2005). Through the combination of listening to tape-recordings immediately after the interviews, as well as transcribing the interviews, the researcher was able to obtain rich data on the research questions.

Transcriptions occurred within a few days of each interview. Once completed, the participants had an opportunity, through member checks, to read through their responses, ensure their accuracy, and provide any additional comments or changes.

Data Analyses

Data analyses occurred in three stages: qualitative content analysis, quantitative analysis, and integration of data. Interview data was examined through content analysis, employing the constant comparative method to generate themes systematically. The CSEI subscale scores were calculated using Minitab software analysis. These results were integrated into a coherent whole to allow for more thoughtful analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

Qualitative Content Analysis of Transcript Data

Content analysis involves the process of interpreting data from transcripts to identify themes and categories. This began immediately following the interview when the researcher listened to the tape-recordings and wrote down additional notes on what was seen or heard in respondent voices. Further reduction occurred when the researcher read the interview transcripts and observational notes and began to develop tentative ideas about themes and categories (Maxwell, 2005). Since the purpose of this research was to generate theory, a constant comparative method was utilized at this stage. “The purpose of constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically” than either approaches alone (Glaser & Strauss, 1978, p.102). The constant comparative method begins by coding each incident in the data into as many categories or themes as possible and into new themes as they emerge. A defining rule for this process as postulated by Glaser and Straus (1978) maintains that “while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (p.106). The next step in the constant comparative

method is to integrate categories that relate to each research question. As the theory begins to solidify, modifications become fewer as new incidents fit into the original set of categories. Finally, more complex theories can be generated from the data and provide insight into the research questions (p.114).

In order to categorize the data regarding the student-advisor relationship, the researcher assessed the strength of the relationship (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Responses to questions 4, 5, and 6 in the second interview were analyzed to categorize the strength of the relationship: strong relationship, minimal relationship, or weak/non-existent relationship. Classifying the degree of relationship was compared with changes in the CSEI results from the first to second administration of the survey.

Quantitative Analysis

Upon completion of the CSEI, data was input into Minitab. Mean scores were calculated for both subscales. Mean scores from both administrations of the inventory were compared to determine if any changes occurred using a two-sample t-test. Using a t-test determined if the sample means differed enough to determine if real differences existed between the two mean self efficacy scores (Bernard, 1994). A two-sample t-test is most appropriate when the direction in which variables covary is known. “You are then only interested in whether the magnitude of some statistic is significant (i.e., whether you would have expected that magnitude by chance)” (p. 423).

Integration of Data

Integration of the qualitative and quantitative data provided a thorough method of evaluating the research questions (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). The primary focus of

this research is to determine if intrusive advising has an impact on academic self efficacy. Comparing the strength of the advisor-student relationship with changes in CSEI scores helped answer this question.

Trustworthiness

Legitimation is the final step in data analysis in which the trustworthiness of qualitative and quantitative data and subsequent interpretations is assessed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Researchers can promote trustworthiness through the use of strategies to identify and rule out ways “you might go wrong” (Maxwell, 2005, p.105).

Credibility

Enhancing the credibility of research findings requires careful attention in establishing trustworthiness of the data. Member checking and triangulation are two methods in this study used to enhance credibility.

Conducting member checks helped to ensure the researcher did not misinterpret the responses of the participants.

This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own bias and misunderstanding of what you observed. (Maxwell, 2005, p.111)

Member checks are done through soliciting feedback from respondents. In the present study member checks were conducted twice, following both interviews. The transcripts were given to students and they had an opportunity to read through and amend their interview transcripts.

Triangulation provided another means for establishing credibility through the use of multiple data sources and methods (Morse, 1991). According to Maxwell (2005), “this strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method, and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops” (p. 112). Through a between-methods triangulation the bias inherent in either data source can be canceled out (Denzin, 1978). In this study, student interviews and the CSEI administered at both the beginning and end of the first term of enrollment were used to achieve triangulation.

Transferability

Qualitative studies typically study a small number of individuals using a purposeful sample rather probability sampling; therefore, explicit generalizability claims about the data can not be made. Maxwell (2005) distinguishes between two types of generalizability: internal and external. Internal generalizability refers to within group transferability, while external generalizability refers to beyond group transferability. “The descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity of the conclusions of a case study all depend on their internal generalizability to the case as a whole” (Maxwell, 2005, p.115).

The external transferability of data is enhanced through the collection and presentation of “rich” data that provide a thick description of analysis. Maxwell (2005) states that rich data can be collected from the interview process through verbatim transcripts. The use of transcripts allowed the researcher to review exactly what the respondents stated in their interview and helped to prevent the interpretation to be influenced by the researcher’s prejudices or expectations. A thick description provided

the complete description of the variables being studied: student expectations regarding college and academic advising, academic self efficacy, and college experiences in the first term of enrollment (Smith, 2003).

Dependability

The use of research teams is one method that can be used to strengthen the dependability of a study (Smith, 2003). However, in this study in which there is only one researcher, the use of a research team was not plausible. Yin (1989) recommends a technique to enhance the dependability of research that was utilized in this research. The method involves filing the data in such a way that someone could follow the chain of evidence. The researcher created a coherent chain of assumptions from the data that included the raw data through the final write-up. This enables someone else to check the 'paper trail' and understand the logic of the researcher.

Guba (1981) asserts that credibility and dependability are highly interrelated. Therefore, the described techniques of member checks and triangulation also helped to ensure the accuracy of the data and helped to ensure the dependability of this study.

Confirmability

The confirmability of a study is comparable with the quantitative term, objectivity. According to Phillips and Burbules (2000), it is not possible to achieve objectivity or to eliminate researcher subjectivity in qualitative research. It is impossible to eliminate the values and expectations of the researcher; however, it is important for researchers to explain any possible bias and how they plan to deal with it in the research design (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The researcher in this study is employed at the institution in which the research is taking place. However, there are no direct benefits of demonstrating an existing relationship between intrusive academic advising and academic self efficacy beliefs.

Addressing the trustworthiness of the data helped to ensure the analysis of the results is reliable. Rich data, collected through the transcription of interview tapes, and member checks, conducted after each interview, helped provide a thick description of the data and ensured accuracy. Utilizing a validated self efficacy inventory ensured that academic self efficacy was being measured and conducting between-methods triangulation helped to remove any bias inherent in either collection method.

Limitations of Methodology

“A discussion of the study’s limitations demonstrates that the researcher understand this reality – that she will make no [presumptuous] claims about generalizability or conclusiveness relative to what she has learned” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 42). No research study is without limitations.

Inherent in qualitative studies is researcher bias. As stated earlier, it is important to acknowledge the researcher’s experience working with first-year students. These experiences provided insight into the impact of a good advising relationship. Students with limited or negative contact with advisors appear to struggle more in adjusting to the college environment. Students with positive, high-contact relationships appear to navigate college resources more effectively.

Identifying personal views on first-year students and advising helped to separate them from the data and allowed the data, not the opinions, to guide the study. The

researcher's bias was further reduced by the extensive literature review that highlights the need to support first-year students and the role academic advising can play in that support.

As is the case in many qualitative studies, the small sample size of this study was a limitation. Although research findings provide new theories in supporting first-year students, the small sample size makes it difficult to generalize the findings to all other college student populations. However, the study participants, to the extent possible, were representatives of the diversity that exists in higher education. Therefore, they could be considered a random sample. Thus, the results obtained can provide additional insight into better supporting first-year college students.

Conclusion

First-year retention rates have seen minimal gains as high numbers of first-year students are leaving college due to insufficient academic skills and inability to adjust to the academic and social life of college (Barefoot, 2000; Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Tinto, 1987). Programs that provide strategies to improve the transition from high school to college and that help develop skills to facilitate academic success are needed (Barefoot, 2000; Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Tinto, 2004). This study presented a mixed method approach to examine intrusive academic advising and the impact of this program on first-year students. Using a grounded theory approach, the primary goal of this research was to generate theory. Similar studies investigating first-year perceptions and expectations have also employed a grounded theory approach (Gofen, 2009; Ritzhaupt et al., 2008; Thompson, 2008). Semi-structured interviews and the College Self Efficacy

Inventory (Solberg et. al., 1993) were utilized to gather data. The data was analyzed through a constant comparative analysis to reduce the data and determine existing themes within the data. Member checks and triangulation were employed to promote trustworthiness of the data. Through the combination of the above measures for mixed methods research design, further insight into the relationship between intrusive academic advising and academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students was provided.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter I described current challenges facing first-year students at U.S. colleges and universities. Academic support departments are increasingly being asked to demonstrate how they support student learning, as well as prove their value to higher education institutions (The Higher Learning Commission, 2007; Morpew, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Chapter II provided an in-depth analysis of first-year students, academic advising, and academic self efficacy beliefs of students. Although the research on the relationship between intrusive advising, retention, and grade point average (GPA), as well as the relationship between self efficacy beliefs and GPA is abundant, no published studies could be found that address how intrusive advising and academic self efficacy relate to each other and to first-year student success. As described in Chapter III, this mixed-methods study was designed to provide needed data regarding the intrusive advising approach and its influence on academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. This chapter offers an analysis of the data collected from multiple interviews conducted with eight first-year students and their responses to the College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) at the beginning and at the completion of the first 10-week quarter of enrollment (Solberg et. al., 1993). The expectations and experiences of these

students, when considered against the existing literature, serve as a viable lens through which to view the perceptions of first-year students regarding their transition into higher education and their experiences with intrusive advising. This chapter provides background information on the eight participants and then reports the data as they relate to each of the four research questions that guided this study.

The research questions examine the connection between intrusive academic advising and academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. Interviews conducted at the beginning and at the completion of the first term of enrollment addressed these four questions:

1. What are first-year college student expectations for the intrusive academic advising experience that they anticipate receiving during their first term of enrollment?
2. To what extent do academic self efficacy perceptions of first-year students engaged in an intrusive academic advising program change during their first term of enrollment?
3. What do first-year students believe makes an impact on their academic self efficacy beliefs during their first term?
4. To what extent and in what ways do first-year college students believe the quality of their intrusive academic advising experiences contribute to their transition into the academic life of their institution?

Integration of the qualitative and quantitative data provides an effective method of evaluating the four research questions (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

The data analysis is strengthened by use of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1978; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Through this method, similar viewpoints are grouped into themes using content analysis. This began immediately following each interview, when the researcher listened to the tape-recording and recorded additional notes. Further reduction occurred when the researcher read the interview transcripts and developed tentative ideas about themes. Each incident in the data was coded into as many themes as possible and then integrated into categories that related to each research question. After the analysis had begun, the researcher saw that similarities in the data, or themes, were occurring across 3 or more participants (Dey, 1993).

Participant Background

For the purpose of strengthening this study, the researcher sought a participant pool that was as diverse as possible, while also reflecting the diversity of first-year students at the participating institution. Although the participants do not match the population exactly, they do represent a diverse sampling of first-year students, as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

(n = 8)

Gender	Ethnicity	Age
Females: 4 (50%)	African-American: 3 (37%)	18 - 20 Years: 4 (50%)
Males: 4 (50%)	Caucasian: 4 (50%)	21 - 25 Years: 2 (25%)
	Hispanic: 1 (13%)	26 + Years: 2 (25%)

The participants are described in further detail below. Pseudonyms have been given to each participant to protect his or her identity.

Adam is a 19-year-old, African-American, first-year male student. Adam graduated in 2009 from a predominantly black high school with a high school GPA of 2.7. In the first interview, Adam discussed the fact that his high school did not have enough “resources” for all students, primarily textbooks. This made it more difficult for him to be academically successful. Seeing that his high school was predominantly black, he looked for a college that had more diversity in the student body. Overall, Adam had a focused approach to college and believed college was his opportunity to learn more about his major, Business, and help him secure a strong future for himself.

Brooke is a 19-year-old, African-American, first-year female student. She is enrolled in the Medical Assisting program. Brooke graduated in 2009 from a racially diverse high school, with a GPA of 2.47. Although Brooke was the first volunteer for this research, she appeared to be a quiet, more reserved student. She sometimes had difficulty answering questions in detail, appearing shy or embarrassed although the questioning was non-invasive. This could be in part due to a minor speech-impediment that made it difficult for the researcher to understand her responses at times.

Chris is an outgoing, 22-year-old, White, first-year male student. He is enrolled in the Culinary Arts program. Chris graduated in 2006 from an American school in Dubai. His family moved frequently while he was growing up and settled in the United States soon after his graduation from high school. Chris mentioned his family’s love of

cooking, which led him to the Culinary Arts program at the university. Chris graduated with a 2.03, C average, from high school.

Darcy is a quiet, 19-year-old, Hispanic, first-year female student. She is also in the Culinary Arts program. Darcy is a student athlete and appeared to be very connected to her team members. Darcy graduated in 2009 from a racially diverse high school with a 3.45 GPA. Approximately half of the high school students was Caucasian and the remaining half was a combination of Hispanic and African-American students. The high school was also a mixture of middle- and low-income families, with about 33% in the low-income category. Overall, Darcy is a more reserved individual, having a difficult time expanding on her responses to questions. At times, she even mocked herself for not having more to say about the researcher's questions.

Evan is a 44-year-old, African-American, first-year male student. He is enrolled in the Fitness program and aspires to be a personal trainer. He graduated from a racially diverse high school in 1984 with a 3.79 GPA. Evan decided to work after high school, having children at a young age. His son is now in college, which has motivated him to focus on himself and attend college as well. Evan spoke frequently about his life lessons that have helped him get to the point where he is today. He is very outgoing, motivated, and has a take charge attitude about life. He works in the university Library and enjoys being "close to college resources."

Fran is a 37-year-old, White, female, first-year student. She is a single mother of 5 children and stated that she is attending college so she can provide a better life for her children. Fran is enrolled in the Medical Assisting program and is very motivated to earn

her degree to be a good role model for her children. She graduated from high school in 1990 with a 2.34 GPA. The high school she attended was 97% White and comprised primarily of upper-middle class families. Having children at a young age prevented her from attending college directly after high school. Although she came from a more privileged upbringing, she talked about the challenges and hardships of raising five children by herself.

George is a 25-year-old, White, male, first-year student. He is enrolled in the Business program at the university. George graduated from a private, catholic high school in 2002 with a 1.99 GPA. The high school was primarily comprised of White, middle- and upper middle class families. George discussed the fact that he “skated through high school.” He has diabetes and stated he would use that with some teachers as a reason he did not complete assignments. Many times they would feel sorry for him and “pass me along”. George has a very jovial personality, making it evident to the researcher how easy it has been for him to develop good relationships with faculty and other students. He decided to start working immediately following high school, but was motivated to earn a college degree after being terminated or not considered for positions because he did not have a degree. He stated that he wanted to prove to everyone that he has what it takes to be a college graduate.

Heather is an 18-year-old, White, female, first-year student. She is enrolled in the Culinary Arts program at the university and an Honors student. She graduated from a predominantly White, upper middle class high school with a 3.68 GPA. She is a very confident individual, stating that she has always done well in school, so expects the same

in college. She, too, had a very upbeat and outgoing personality, having an easy time engaging with the researcher and providing thoughtful responses to interview questions. She decided to enroll in the Culinary program because those courses were her favorite in high school. Heather also talked about her supportive parents and family, who were very encouraging of her attending college and provided the needed financial support.

Data Analysis

Students were interviewed within the first two weeks of their first term of enrollment at the university. They were interviewed a second time upon completion of the 10-week term. Preceding both interviews, participants completed the College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI). Using the constant comparative method, the interview results are summarized below in conjunction with the results from the CSEI.

What are First-Year College Student Expectations for the Intrusive Academic Advising Experience That They Anticipate Receiving During Their First Term of Enrollment?

It was important to gain an understanding of student *expectations* for advising to obtain a cohesive understanding of the first-year student experience and to provide initial insight for addressing the research questions. Therefore, to address the first research question, interview questions centered on student expectations for advising, including how the students preferred to be contacted and the types of feedback they preferred.

Over half of the participants responded that they “did not know” when asked about expectations for academic advising. They had never given it much thought. Most had to be prodded, given more direction on what the researcher meant by academic advising. The researcher tried to relate the concept of an academic advisor to a high

school guidance counselor. However, most students had limited interactions with their counselor, if any. They had nothing to relate “academic advising” to, and therefore struggled with responding to this question.

Through further discussion with the students, a major theme was that an academic advisor’s role is to help with classes. This includes giving insight into which classes to take, suggesting the “right” ones to take to meet graduation requirements, and to help with difficult classes, including accessing tutoring and determining whether or not to withdraw from a class. Adam stated that his advisor will “... help me out with putting me in the right classes for my business major... if I’m uncomfortable with a class, hopefully they can guide me through that or change the class or offer some assistance.”

Brooke stated,

I would hope it to be like if I need help or if I’m going to have to change a class, she would like give me some suggestions of what I should do and how to do it, what would be the best class for me to take if I didn’t like one of my classes.

Darcy stated that she would go to an advisor,

Like if I’m really doing bad in a class, or I don’t know, if I have questions on just random things... like what courses maybe I should take next or...Maybe like should I take summer off? Should I go year round?

A second, emerging theme was the expectation that the advisor would offer support and guidance throughout their college experience. Adam stated, “Taking my hand and guiding me all the way through graduation, being there, supportive. If I have questions, hopefully they can answer them.” Evan stated, “I expect someone to guide me through, carry me through, or assist me in finding out any of the unknowns. Help me out with it.”

In today's technological society, it could be assumed that most students prefer to be contacted through email. However, most of the participants preferred face-to-face contact and the immediate affirmation received as a by-product of this method. This major theme could be due in part to the age range of participants. However, even the 18-20 year old participants preferred this method or a combination of face-to-face communication and phone/ email. Fran stated,

You do an email or do it over the phone and it's not so personal. And when you do it face-to-face you're able to see the person, the expressions, to see if they are actually listening to you. And that's what you want to see. Anybody can type and do what-not on the computer but being able to see somebody's expressions, that's what matters.

George supported this statement by stating, "I like face-to-face... I'm not a big internet person; I'm not big over the phone. I like face-to-face. I'm not a big fan of technology at all... I don't like to make it so distant." Chris's comments demonstrated the combination of contact method that was stated by some participants, "Probably face-to-face. Or the phone. I'm not a fan, I mean I don't mind emails, but I don't know, face-to-face or phone seems like it gets it more solidified. Like this will actually happen." Adam also preferred the combination approach, stating,

Email and meetings; email and face-to-face. Email is the big thing nowadays, of course, so I would prefer email because its part of the future. Face-to-face would be nice, but I don't want to take too much of their time.

Because most participants had limited expectations for academic advising, the major theme for the type of feedback focused more on approachability of the advisor. It was important for students to have a sense of comfort with their advisor and to feel at ease if they need to approach him or her with a question or concern. Brooke stated, "A

person that I could feel comfortable with and talk to.” Chris commented similarly, stating, “...but just to be able to talk to one another as a normal person. If I need help I would just go talk to her pretty much.” George’s orientation experience prior to the start of the term influenced his view on the approachability of his advisor: “It was all very comfortable right away. Like they knew me by name, what I was doing, what I was here for, and it felt very good.”

A major theme regarding expectations for advisor feedback was the expectation that the feedback focused on class and academic performance. When asked what kind of feedback they would like to receive from their advisor Heather stated, “Just to talk about maybe how my grades have been doing.” Darcy stated, “Like if I’m really doing bad in a class.” Brooke responded similarly: “If they see me doing well, I would like positive feedback. If they see me slipping, I would like to be encouraged to do better.”

To What Extent Do Academic Self Efficacy Perceptions of First-Year Students Engaged in an Intrusive Academic Advising Program Change During Their First Term of Enrollment?

The primary research question in this study considers the extent to which academic self efficacy perceptions of first-year students engaged in an intrusive academic advising program change during the first term of enrollment. To address this question, participants were asked questions in four main areas: high school experiences, definitions of academic success, first-term college experiences, and self efficacy rating. These questions provided a viewpoint on academic self efficacy perceptions upon starting college and the extent to which they changed over the course of the first term of

enrollment. These data, further triangulated with results on the CSEI and the perceived strength of the student-advisor relationship, provide a credible approach for addressing the research question.

High school experiences. In order to obtain baseline knowledge regarding the state at which students were beginning their college experience, it was important to gain an understanding of high school experiences and overall feelings of academic preparedness at the first interview. The majority of participants thought they could have done better academically in high school. Although some felt it was more or less challenging, they believed their overall performance did not accurately reflect their abilities. Evan stated, “I could’ve done a lot better; I could have done a lot better. I wasn’t a terrible student. I graduated on time and all that good stuff but I could have done a lot better, better than C’s.” Brooke responded similarly to Evan, stating, “I think I was satisfied [with academic performance] but I could’ve done a little bit better when I think about it. I could’ve put a little more effort into it. I could’ve studied more.” Chris stated,

I did pretty good. I mean I wasn’t the best; I wasn’t the worst, but I was up, almost up there. I could have done better in senior year but I slacked off in senior year. It was senior year; you have to have fun.

Some differences existed between the responses of the younger and older students regarding overall preparedness for college. Students in the 18-20 year old group felt they were academically prepared, yet expressed some doubt in their college readiness. Heather stated that she thought college classes “will be totally different. More challenging, harder.” When comparing high school to college, Darcy stated,

...more strict, more like this is your life; get it together type of thing...it's left totally up to me. If I want to do the work, then I can. It's like all of a sudden you're like on your own.

The older adults, aged 21 years and older, had a stronger level of confidence that they attributed to "real-life" having prepared them for the challenges they would be facing in college. Since they had overcome particular challenges in their own personal or professional lives, college was just another one of these challenges. Fran stated,

...because now I've had a lot of life experience and I've seen what's out there and I know what to expect from what's out there. Not in school but what's out basically I guess you could say the real world. So I know what goals I need to set, what I need to look for, what I need to do. Back twenty, sixteen, I wouldn't have been able to do it because you learn that and then go out in the real world and I would've been, huh?

George stated in high school,

I kind of slacked off a little bit; I was lazy. Then after a break between high school and college, I came in the first day ready to go. I'm ready to go. I mean I want to get it done. I didn't know what I wanted to do before and I finally figured it out. I've been working with my uncle who is an executive chef, so it's just a habit now.

Evan also discussed how his life experiences prepared him for college,

Yes, I feel adequately prepared because I had been doing the same job for the past eleven years and got laid off and I also realized there's no room for advancement there. So once the layoff occurred I said I'm going to actually put forth the effort and go to college, do something I like doing. I knew I had it in me all along. But again, I always let my job interfere with actually executing the first step and that's going in there and at least finding out about the college courses and how long it would be and this and that.

Definition of academic success: first interview. Academic self efficacy beliefs are the judgments people have regarding their ability to be academically successful (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, asking participants how they define academic success provided insight into how they form those beliefs. Three themes emerged from this question. Getting good

grades was the first theme, discussed by every participant specifically. When asked how they define being academically successful, Brooke stated, “My grades, my test scores, how I’ve grown from being in high school to college... I usually slack off. Now I’m disciplined; I’m dedicated and determined to focus.” Chris commented similarly, stating “Just do good in class; get a good grade in class and work.” Evan also stated, “Academic success to me would be getting better than a ‘C’. I’ve gotten good grades in the past, so now all I have to do is stick to my guns.”

A second, emerging, theme to this question expanded the notion of grades to the comprehension and application of coursework. Success is not only getting good grades, but is ultimately displayed in the knowledge gained. Heather stated,

It’s a combination of doing my best and getting the most out of it at the same time, just so I can still have it all like in my brain and it’s not...it’s one of those things where it’s not worth it to store things in your short term memory for one test when you need to store it in your long term memory for your career.

Fran stated, “...it’s actually like learning something and applying it to your life or your major. So it’s not all actually grades; it’s actually how you... if you absorb the information and apply it to your life.” George responded similarly, stating “Hard work, a high GPA, and walking out of here with the confidence and knowledge that what I just learned I can actually apply to the real world.”

The majority of participants also believed that the primary contributor of their success was themselves. It was up to oneself to earn good grades, and ultimately the degree, through studying and doing the work. Adam stated,

How would I define academic success in college? Well I would say a lot of studying. For you to be successful in college academically you have to immerse

yourself in books, and studying, research, and also paying attention in class... Oh, and another thing, turning in your work is another thing, a key thing.

Brooke supported Adam's beliefs in what contributes to her success, stating "Studying a lot, that's one main thing. Studying, doing my work, ask for help if I need help, see teachers for tutoring and stuff like that." Darcy stated, "Having focus and studying, make sure there's time for school."

First-term college experiences. At the second interview, all participants reported they had a good experience overall in the first term of enrollment. Four major themes arose regarding their experiences. The first theme was that the students were happy with their performance. Brooke stated,

It went pretty good. Yeah. I got two A's, a B, and a C. I wanted to get good grades so I pushed myself to get good grades, which I did, so hopefully this next quarter will be the same.

Darcy stated, "They [grades] were actually better. I wasn't expecting two A's... I got two A's and two B's. That's two and two so I wasn't really expecting it to be that good, but it was, so I'm happy." George responded similarly when asked about his performance, "Excellent. Very good... I think I have three A's and a B this quarter."

The second theme was that students were satisfied with their performance, yet believed they could have done better. Adam stated,

My academic performance was, in my opinion, moderate but not the best. Compared to my performance I would say I put in 100% and basically my results were probably what I expected almost out of what I did.

Evan stated,

It went pretty good. It was basically biting off a little more than I could chew mainly dealing with math. It's been so many years since I've seen x plus y equals

z over 2. Well I got a D bottom line and I wasn't too happy with it but I know better next time.

Fran also stated, "It was ok. I expected it to be harder, and it was. I did alright, but now that I know what I know, I think I can do better this next quarter."

The third theme was that the first term was a learning experience for the students, determining how to organize their time best and preparing for final exams. Chris stated,

I was kind of like not knowing what to expect in some cases but it worked out well. I mean I did myself in, in a few of the curriculum classes, but, in general, I got to figuring it out in the end. But it was a learning experience.

Adam responded similarly, stating

I started out with good grades, A's and B's, and then at the end of the quarter my finals shocked the mess out of me... The time schedule was mind boggling to me... the organization wasn't perfect to me. So that's one thing that brought me down.

Darcy also discussed challenges with finals week and time management,

...it was finals week and that's when I said I really need to get my sh*t together basically. Like we had to do portfolios and stuff and I waited till the last minute to do both of them... it was just I need to study more and I need to manage, time manage a little better.

The fourth theme emerged when the students were asked what impacted their expectations of being successful the most during the course of the first term. Over half of the students responded that the teachers and the feedback they provided had the most impact. Heather stated,

The teachers helped; they were very easygoing. Right away every teacher at the beginning of class explains to you what you're gonna need to do to get an A and I like that because if you meet their criteria, they say show up, study, and participate in class and then you'll be fine.

Fran responded similarly,

The teachers that I have. Like I said they're more than willing to work with you. They don't act like they're here just to be here to earn a paycheck. They've even said so; they're here to help us pass; they're not here to help us fail.

George stated,

Actually how much the teachers care here; it surprised me. Because I always heard that college, oh they don't care if you show up; they don't care how well you do. And that's actually not the truth; that's maybe at bigger schools or something, but not here. They definitely care. I got emails from teachers throughout the semester saying, good job on this; make sure you keep up with you know. Yeah, teachers are definitely on you still.

Self efficacy rating. Academic self efficacy was measured in two ways, through the College Self Efficacy Inventory (Solberg et. al., 1993) and through questions during the interviews. Scores at the onset of the first term of enrollment provided insight into the level of academic self efficacy upon entering college. Comparing the initial scores and feedback with the self efficacy data gathered upon completion of the first term enabled the researcher to determine if changes occurred in self-reported academic self efficacy. Furthermore, by comparing statistically significant differences in the CSEI self efficacy measurement along with the perceived strength of the student-advisor relationship, the second research question could be examined.

This study used two subscales of the CSEI: academic-course self efficacy and academic-social self efficacy. For both scales, students were asked to rate their level of confidence on six college-related items using a Likert scale, in which 0 = totally unconfident, 1 = very unconfident, 2 = unconfident, 3 = somewhat unconfident, 4 = undecided, 5 = somewhat confident, 6 = confident, 7 = very confident, and 8 = totally confident. On the first completion of the CSEI, the mean scores for the two subscales were 5.75 and 6.13, respectively. This reflects the measurement of "somewhat confident"

to “confident” in self efficacy beliefs. After the first term of enrollment the students completed the inventories for a second time, with mean scores of 6.854 and 7.250, respectively. In both the course and social self efficacy subscales, students reported higher levels of confidence in their abilities, marking “confident” to “very confident” in their beliefs. Individual scores are noted in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2
Mean Scores for Academic-Course Self Efficacy

Participant	Test 1 Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Test 2 Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	7.500	1.18	6.667	-0.11
2	5.667	-0.05	5.667	-0.74
3	6.833	0.72	7.000	0.09
4	6.833	0.72	6.330	-0.34
5	5.000	-0.51	7.667	0.51
6	6.500	0.51	6.500	0.22
7	3.000	-1.86	7.000	0.09
8	4.667	-0.73	8.000	0.72

0 = totally unconfident, 1 = very unconfident, 2 = unconfident, 3 = somewhat unconfident, 4 = undecided, 5 = somewhat confident, 6 = confident, 7 = very confident, and 8 = totally confident

Table 3
Mean Scores for Academic-Social Self Efficacy

Participant	Test 1 Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Test 2 Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	5.667	-0.57	7.500	0.39
2	5.833	-0.36	6.000	-0.64
3	7.667	1.96	7.833	0.84
4	3.000	-3.94	6.500	-0.96
5	7.833	2.17	7.500	0.39
6	7.500	1.75	7.500	0.39
7	5.333	-1.00	8.000	2.42
8	6.167	0.06	6.833	-0.51

0 = totally unconfident, 1 = very unconfident, 2 = unconfident, 3 = somewhat unconfident, 4 = undecided, 5 = somewhat confident, 6 = confident, 7 = very confident, and 8 = totally confident

Conducting two-sample t-tests on the mean scores determined whether or not the sample means differed enough to determine whether real differences exist between the two mean self efficacy scores. As shown in Table 4, the t-value for the academic-course self efficacy data was -1.89, with a P-value of 0.04. Therefore, there is enough evidence to support the claim that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of Test 1 compared to the mean scores of Test 2. Similar results were found with the academic-social self efficacy data. The t-value for the subscale was found to be -1.81, with a P-value of 0.045. Again, there is enough evidence to support the claim that the mean scores were significantly different between each administration of the test.

Table 4
Two-sample T-tests for CSEI results

CSEI Subscale	T-value	P-value	df
<i>Academic-course self efficacy</i>	-1.89	0.040*	14
<i>Academic-social self efficacy</i>	-1.81	0.045*	14

* $p < .05$.

During both interviews, each participant was asked questions specifically targeting their views about academic self efficacy. One interview question asked participants to rate their confidence in their ability to earn a degree at the institution, using the same Likert scale as the CSEI, and to explain the reasoning behind their response. After completion of the first term of enrollment, two major themes emerged from the interview question regarding the reasoning for their self efficacy beliefs: 1) the support and structure of the university made participants believe they could be successful, and 2) their academic success in the first term made them believe they could be successful.

The first theme is centered on the support and structure provided by the university. Chris stated, “You know what to expect in class. You know how things are going to be going on now. You know the structure of the school.” Fran stated,

There are people from the college, who are from here, saying, telling us about themselves and what they do here. And this is how, if you need something, this is how you go talk to this person. This is what you’ve got to do for this.

George also stated, “Everything is planned for you here. You show up and try, you will be done in three and a half years. It’s very simple.”

The second theme concerning academic self efficacy focused on academic success experienced during the first term. Darcy stated, “Right now, I mean it’s probably going to get more difficult towards the end...but right now it’s pretty simple. It’s pretty straightforward. It’s do all your classes; learn as much as you can.” Evan stated, “...when I see the final grades, all A’s and B’s... I know I’m in the right direction; I just gotta keep doing what I’m doing.” Heather also stated, “Just because I mean so far I’ve had not easy classes, but just an easy time with classes.”

Both themes are supported by major themes regarding student responses to the question: “I feel confident when _____.” Earning good grades/knowing the course material was one of two themes for this question. Adam stated, “When I do the work and get A’s on my assignments, then I feel more confident to do more and learn more.” Brooke responded similarly stating, “When I know the material and I know I can pass the tests, that makes me feel confident.” Chris also stated, “I feel confident when I know what I’m doing in the class.” This focus on grades relates to Bandura’s (1986) theory on enactive attainment. Past academic performance influences academic self efficacy of individuals. Bandura purported that enactive attainment is the most influential source of self efficacy because it is based on a mastery of skills: success raises efficacy appraisals (1986).

The second theme for the interview question focusing on feeling confident related to positive contact with teachers. George stated,

It’s me and the teachers, so it’s really helping, which I love. I mean every single teacher...I shook every single teacher’s hand and said thank you...if I had a couple bad teachers I might be out of here already.

Fran stated,

...when I like the teachers to tell you the truth. I know that shouldn't be a guideline of making me feel confident but if I feel comfortable with the teacher, I love the class. Even if it's not a fun subject, if I like the teacher, it's good for me.

Heather responded similarly, stating

It's a lot of teachers coming by and saying that you're doing a really good job... So even if I was ever having trouble I mean it would literally just take me talking to my teacher to kind of get things back on schedule and see what I can do to get better.

Perceived strength of the student-advisor relationship. Student responses to interview questions 4, 5, and 6 assess the strength of the student-advisor relationship. Based on the feedback, the relationship was categorized in one of three ways: strong relationship, minimal relationship, or weak/non-existent relationship. One participant had a weak relationship, 3 had minimal relationships, and 4 had strong relationships. Interestingly, a major theme in response to these questions was that it was a "good thing" not to see an advisor often. Many viewed frequent conversations with an advisor as a weakness, signaling poor academic performance. When asked about the relationship with an advisor, Adam responded, "I have not talked to her in her office... I would see that as a good thing almost because I'm not in the office because I'm getting bad grades." Evan stated, "I think normally when you do hear from them... it's going to be because you're failing something terribly bad." Darcy also stated, "I haven't seen her much, but that's a good thing, otherwise I'd probably be failing a class or something."

Another major theme identified within these questions is the security and comfort of knowing the advisor was there for students should they need it. George responded, "I

know I can just drop by her office any time and she'll have time to talk with me". Brooke stated, "You got your advisor for the whole time so if anything goes wrong, she's right there." Evan also stated, "We've just gotten a lot more comfortable and there's a... I find that I'm just able to peek my head in the door and talk to her if she's not with anybody and I like that." Heather responded, "We know that she's always available." Although faculty were mentioned as helping with overall confidence in earlier interview questions, it appears that having the support of an advisor was seen as a positive aspect to the college experience.

In summary, the academic course self efficacy and academic social self efficacy beliefs of the participants increased during the first term of enrollment. Half of the students had strong relationships with their academic advisors, and another 3 had minimal relationships with their advisors. It can be inferred that some relationship between the student-advisor relationship and academic self efficacy does exist, but clearly self efficacy is influenced by other variables. Considering the data regarding the remaining two research questions provides further insight into this concept.

What do first-year students believe makes an impact on their academic self efficacy beliefs during their first term?

As stated earlier, when students were asked what impacted their expectations of being successful the most, major themes were their academic performance as well as the faculty and the feedback they provided. Although faculty were mentioned as helping with overall confidence, it also appeared that having the support of an advisor was seen as a positive aspect to the college experience. Student responses to questions regarding the

university resources utilized during the first term as well as resources students expect to use in the future provide further support for this. Three themes emerged around resources students expected to use: faculty, advisors, and other students.

In regards to faculty, as described above, George stated, “If I had a couple of bad teachers, I might be out of here already”. Chris responded,

I use just the faculty right now. I mean if I have to use other resources I’ll use them, but as far up till now I only have to talk to faculty... I think the faculty is what helped me the most, being able to talk to them one-on-one whenever you need to, they’re here for you.

Brooke also stated,

I’d probably talk with Johnson (faculty name has been changed). I see him the most ...And he’s pretty much been here for a while so he knows his way around...He’s easy to talk to. We know how he is and he knows how we are, so we’re kind of comfortable with him.

Overall, the students viewed faculty support as essential to their success.

Academic advisors were seen more as a peripheral resource who provide the structure needed to stay focused on the end goal: graduation. When asked which resources they would access in the future, Darcy stated, “Probably advisors because they’ve seen so many people go through the whole process, getting their associates, going for bachelor’s.” Evan stated his advisor helped by “...pointing me in the right direction, keeping me abreast on where I’m at it as far as credit wise and this and that...on track, yeah, and then just in the right direction altogether.” George also mentioned his advisor,

Keep me on track and to not be... You know, some other schools sometimes they let you drift away from what you need... So that’s what I like; that’s what I feel. That they’re going to be here for the whole time. I love that. Tell me what I need to do.

Other students were also seen as an additional support structure. Adam stated, “My best resource is people, educated people, meaning students who’ve been through the lessons and who can offer tutoring.” Chris stated,

...and you have other students as friends, not only as friends, but as classmates too, that are there to help you...It makes it better because we help each other when we’re stuck on something. We rely on one another.

Heather stated,

It’s also your fellow peers sort of trusting you with group projects...It really comes down to communication and sort of trusting one another. It will help you put yourself in a better place and a better sort of frame of mind.

This information, in conjunction with data provided earlier, paints a picture that academic self efficacy may be *most* impacted by academic performance. Knowing the support of faculty, advisors, and students is available provides a level of comfort and security that further encourages more confident self efficacy beliefs.

To what extent and in what ways do first-year college students believe the quality of their intrusive academic advising experiences contribute to their transition into the academic life of their institution?

Considering the first term experiences of students was a primary factor in answering the final research question. In general, students felt their high school preparation helped to set the stage to be successful in college. Adam stated, “I really do think that high school prepared me to a certain extent... they taught you a certain amount, and then when you get in college it’s like the lessons just continue on from high school.” Brooke responded, “It set the ground for me to participate in class more.” Heather stated

In high school and before that I learned how to take good notes and learned how to just use computer programming to find out what I need to do to get things done...In high school it was you learn how you learn things the best and that's really what you need to walk into this school with.

An emerging theme, coming from students 21 years of age and older, was the fact that since they were older, their life experiences and situations kept them focused on their academic goals. Fran stated,

Because of my determination it gives me confidence to do it...I've got five kids; I've got to get this. Getting divorced and everything else it's only my income with five kids and I've got to do this. So it boosts your confidence to get it done. Evan stated, "...life experiences helped pull me through and readjust myself." George also responded, "Actually the real world is what helped me. I've gotten laid off from a dead end job and the most money I've ever made was \$12.00 an hour... you can't support a family on that."

In regards to university resources helping in the transition into college, 5 out of the 8 students reported the faculty helped them. Fran stated,

Well, having understanding professors...Telling professors, you know, at the beginning they ask you what you want to do even further and they actually look at you and tell you, okay after you get done with this, this is what you need to do. And to be honest I wasn't expecting that part.

George stated, "The teachers really push. I felt bad if I didn't come to class prepared almost because I had that kind of relationship with some of the teachers." Heather also responded,

Our teachers tend to pace things really well...even though we only have a short amount of time to get a certain amount of stuff done. They still take their time to explain things very well and to make sure that everybody gets it. That's a really caring thing for them to do...I just love their personalities here."

The use of online resources, including email and Blackboard course software, was a second major theme. When asked about college resources that helped in the transition into college, Darcy responded, “Blackboard. I mean that’s really, that’s like where everything is. I mean that helped a lot.” George stated, “I did enjoy the Blackboard part, seeing your grades right away.” Brooke stated, “If I miss a lesson and I have to catch up, I can go to Blackboard or email my teacher to figure out what’ve we’ve done and what’s going on.”

An emerging theme for resources supporting the transition into college was the academic advisor. As discussed earlier, when asked more specifically about the role of the advisor, a major theme was the negative association with being contacted by the advisor, signaling poor academic performance. A second theme was feeling comfortable approaching the advisor with questions and knowing he or she is there. Heather stated, “...it came down to a lot of asking us if we had any questions about anything which was really convenient just because she was always there...we know that she’s always available.” Adam responded, “If it comes down to anything, if I needed, if I had any questions I would go to her.” Fran also stated,

The way she presented herself at orientation, I knew it was an open door policy. And that if I needed anything that I would be able to go to her...she’d be open to discuss anything that needed to be discussed.

Interestingly, students did not feel the advisor played a role in their academic success, other than through words of encouragement they may have provided. Evan stated,

Well I did tell her I wasn't too keen on the math and I should have withdrew. And she said I think you're going to make it, just hang in there. A few words of encouragement and I just managed to make it.

Brooke also stated,

My experience with her helped me succeed? I would have to say no more than the words of encouragement. Other than, you can make it so keep trying. You're doing okay. And that's just basically all I needed from her.

A surprising, emerging theme was the impact of the advisor knowing the student by name. Knowing students by name seems like a simple task, yet it had a significant impact on students. Evan stated, "She remembers my first name without me having to say anything and it's actually my nick name and she picks right up on it." George also stated, "Oh it's good. They know you by name; they always ask how you're doing... I just couldn't believe she knew me by name...I didn't even know her name when I walked into her office."

As part of the interview, students were asked about the role of their academic advisor in upcoming terms of enrollment. While considering the role of the academic advisor in the future, 7 out of the 8 students stated the advisor would help keep the students on track with the right classes so they graduate on time. George stated, "...they just encourage you to stay on track. I'm just very happy that they have everything listed out... I just want to be kept on track...The structure, that's what I really enjoy." Adam stated, "...I'm sure she'll be a help in keeping me on track, keeping me updated about how I'm doing in class and if I'm graduating in time so it should be a help." Heather responded, "Just the fact that she will go out of her way to sort of have things really organized for each student means a lot because that's a lot less work for us to do."

Overall, the most valuable service of the advisor, as described by the students, is the structure and organization of the required coursework advisors' provide. Students do not have to spend the time determining what courses they need to graduate because their advisor provides this information for them. This response may have been impacted by the duration of the student-advisor relationship thus far, a 10-week quarter. At this point, many interactions between students and advisors have focused on course registration and schedule.

Conclusion

Chapters I and II described the current challenges faced by first-year students in higher education. First-year drop-out rates of nearly 35% point to a need to better support this student population (ACT Institutional Data File, 2008). This mixed-methods study was designed to provide needed data regarding the influence of the intrusive advising approach in supporting first-year students in the transition into college and whether or not this type of advising has an impact on academic self efficacy beliefs. This chapter provided key findings from a thematic analysis of the data that addressed the study's four research questions.

The primary focus of this research was to determine the extent to which academic self efficacy perceptions of first-year students engaged in an intrusive academic advising program change during the first term of enrollment. Results from the College Self Efficacy Inventory demonstrated that significant differences in the mean scores exist between both administrations of the academic-course and academic-social self efficacy subscales. This demonstrated that students' confidence in their academic abilities

improved over the course of the first term of enrollment. Participants reported that faculty and the feedback they provided impacted student expectations for success the most, aside from their academic performance.

The researcher was able to triangulate these data with qualitative data from multiple student interviews. When students were asked about their confidence in their ability to earn a degree at the institution, two major themes impacting their confidence were 1) the support and structure of the university and 2) their academic success in college-level courses. Support and structure were synonymous with faculty and academic advisors, respectively. Therefore, it can be inferred that both of these resources had a positive impact on overall confidence.

A surprising finding in the data was that students had little-to-no expectations for academic advising upon starting college. The researcher had to explain, in general, the role of an academic advisor. This fact does bring into question whether or not the data were impacted by the discussion. In addition, many students viewed limited interaction with an advisor as positive, again bringing into question how this may have impacted the data and how this may impact the student-advisor relationship.

Upon completion of the first term of enrollment students were able to speak more specifically to the role of academic advisors. The overall support and structure advisors provide to students regarding coursework were mentioned frequently as positive aspects to the college experience. The structure and organization of coursework were also a major theme when students were asked about the most valuable service of an advisor.

The structure provides a level of security and reassurance for students because they know the advisor will keep them on track to graduation.

In conclusion, first-year students in this study did experience measurable increases in both academic-course self efficacy and academic-social self efficacy. The support of faculty, advisors, and other students contributed to the confidence levels of students to earn a degree at the university. The role of advisors in providing structure and organization to help keep students on track to graduation was perceived to be the most valuable role of advisors and a valuable part of the overall college experience.

These results provide insight into intrusive academic advising that can be useful to higher education institutions. Chapter V discusses these recommendations for institutions as well as for future research, and relates the findings to other comparable research as described in chapter II.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

Given the increased need to support first-year students in higher education, the purpose of the study is to examine the intrusive advising approach and its influence on academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. A push exists for greater accountability for higher education institutions to demonstrate how they provide environments that support student development and learning. Intrusive advising has been identified as one of the most underestimated characteristics of a successful college experience (Light, 2001). Existing research has linked intrusive academic advising to increased retention and GPA (Austin, 1997; Backhus, 1989; Lopez, 1988). However, in a climate of enhanced accountability, further evidence is needed to determine the degree of relationship, if any, that exists between intrusive advising and academic self efficacy.

Chapter II highlighted three interconnected themes in higher education: the challenges facing first-year students, the use of intrusive academic advising in providing academic support to students, and the role of self-efficacy in predicting academic success. Nearly 35% of first-year students do not begin their sophomore year (ACT Institutional Data File, 2008). Although first-year experience programs have been created at many institutions, it is clear that further support is needed to support students in the transition

into college. Academic advisors are many times the first contact first-year students make within an institution. Advisors may be better positioned than others to provide a supportive relationship to first-year students and provide them with encouragement to influence their self efficacy (McGillan, 2003). Three primary approaches to advising exist: prescriptive, developmental, and a more integrated approach, intrusive academic advising (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The intrusive approach combines the strengths of both approaches, providing the structured format of the prescriptive approach and considering the development of the whole person from the developmental approach. As student populations have changed, intrusive advising has been developed to create relationships that involve shared responsibility, proactive interactions to meet student goals, and encouragement (Earl, 1987b, p.29). Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between intrusive academic advising and improved academic performance. However, research on intrusive academic advising has been more quantitative in nature, focusing primarily on its influence on grade point average and retention. A gap in the literature exists on the quality of the relationship formed between students and advisors and the impact of this relationship on students. What is it about the intrusive advising relationship that impacts grade point average and/or retention?

Self efficacy has also been determined to have a positive effect on academic performance. Higher grades and general academic outcomes have been associated with students possessing higher levels of academic self efficacy and confidence (Hseigh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984, 1987). Research has demonstrated the importance of academic self efficacy as a key factor in the success of

high school to university transitions (Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001; Ratcliffe, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Since both academic self efficacy and intrusive advising have been shown to positively impact academic performance, the question is then raised regarding the relationship between these two variables for first-year students.

The present study provides insight into the impact of an intrusive advising approach on the academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students and on their transition into college. Eight first-year students at a four-year, private institution were interviewed at the beginning and end of the first term to explore the advisor-student relationship. Questions explored student expectations for college and academic advising and examined how the expectations compared with student experiences in the first term of enrollment. In conjunction with the interviews, students completed the College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) (Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel & Davis, 1993). The data gathered from the interviews, along with survey results, provided further insight into the extent to which academic self efficacy changed during the first term and if the advising relationship was an influential factor in measured changes.

Conducting a 2-sample t-test with CSEI scores provided support that first-year students in this study did experience measurable increases in both academic-course self efficacy and academic-social self efficacy upon completion of the first term of enrollment. The support of faculty, advisors, and other students contributed to the confidence levels of students to earn a degree at the university. The role of advisors in providing structure and organization to help keep students on track to graduation was perceived to be the most valuable role of advisors and a valuable part of the overall

college experience. These results provide insight into the practice of intrusive academic advising that can be useful to higher education institutions.

Key Conclusions

As discussed in Chapter II, first-year student populations are comprised of a mixture of traditional age and non-traditional age students. According to Riskey, Moore, and Morley (2007-2008), adult students have a fear of failure and feel underprepared for the academic demands of higher education. A social struggle exists surrounding traditional age students. This is often translated “into a ‘them and us’ attitude, a subjective experience of being very different from their younger counterparts that created feelings of seclusion, rejection, or insecurity” (Riskey et al., 2007-2008, p. 192). Students in this research study included non-traditional aged students, yet these students did not express the same sentiments as Riskey et al. (2007-2008) reported. Non-traditional aged students in this study demonstrated higher levels of confidence in their abilities, attributing their confidence to “real-life” having prepared them for the challenges they would be facing in college. Since they had overcome particular challenges in their personal or professional lives, college was just another one of these challenges. In addition, camaraderie existed between the non-traditional and traditional age groups. Many of the students discussed the value of peer support in their ability to be successful in their courses. They shared a common goal of earning a college degree; this was more influential than differences attributed to age.

The first research question in this study considered the expectations of first-year students regarding intrusive academic advising. Students in this study had a limited

understanding of the role of their academic advisor. After further discussion, most of the students stated they would contact their advisor for help with courses. This included information regarding which courses to take to meet graduation requirements as well as recommendations the advisor has for when the students are not performing well academically. In addition, a major theme regarding expectations for advisor feedback was that the feedback focused on class and academic performance. These findings coincide with Astin's (1997) study which determined high satisfaction levels for students in an intrusive advising program that discussed strategies for overcoming academic challenges.

A second, emerging theme from the student interviews was the expectation that the advisor would offer support and guidance throughout their college experience. This supports Thomas and Minton's (2004) description of intrusive advising. According to Thomas and Minton (2004), intrusive advising is a one-on-one, *supportive* relationship between the advisor and advisee in which the advisor works with each student from the beginning of college through to graduation. A parallel exists between the expectations of students regarding academic advising and the characteristics of intrusive advising.

At the center of this study was the second research question considering the extent to which academic self efficacy perceptions of first-year students changed during the first term of enrollment. Through the use of the College Self Efficacy Inventory (Solberg et al, 1993), a statistically significant difference (improvement) was found in both academic-course and academic-social self efficacy from the beginning to the end of the first term of enrollment. When these concepts were investigated further through interviews, students reported that earning good grades and knowing course material contributed to their

confidence in their ability to be successful. This focus on grades relates to Bandura's (1986) theory on enactive attainment. Past academic performance influences academic self efficacy of individuals. Bandura purported that enactive attainment is the most influential source of self efficacy because it is based on a mastery of skills: success raises efficacy appraisals (1986).

Bandura (1986) also asserted that verbal persuasion is a further information source for academic self efficacy. "Verbal persuasion is widely used to try to talk people into believing they possess capabilities that will enable them to achieve what they seek" (Bandura, 1986, p. 400). This research study supports Bandura's views. Students reported that positive contact with teachers made them feel confident in their abilities. Heather stated, "It's a lot of teachers coming by and saying that you're doing a really good job." The feedback of advisors also contributed to students' confidence levels. Evan recalled an experience with a difficult class, stating that his advisor said "I think you're going to make it, just hang in there. A few words of encouragement and I just managed to make it." Brooke, responding similarly to Evan, discussed the words of encouragement from her advisor: "...you can make it so keep trying. You're doing okay. And that's just basically all I needed from her."

Many of the students in this study commented on the grades earned in their first term of enrollment. Although the grades are self-reported, all of the students appeared to be in good academic standing, earning grades of "C" or above in their courses. Good academic standing, combined with the improvement in academic self efficacy beliefs over the first term, support Hseigh et al. (2007) study which found that GPA was

positively correlated with self-efficacy and that self-efficacy was higher for students in good academic standing.

The fourth research question which guided this study addressed the experiences of students that contributed to their transition into the academic life of the institution. Students reported that the support and guidance they received from their advisor contributed to their confidence in being successful in college. Knowing that their advisor is always available and approachable provided a level of comfort to the students. Although a variety of factors contribute to the resiliency of first-year students, 100% of students in this study were enrolled at the completion of the first term of enrollment. This potential positive impact of intrusive advising on retention supports previous research demonstrating the higher retention percentages of students participating in intrusive advising programs compared to students not enrolled in such a program (Astin, 1997; Backhus, 1989; Thomas & Minton, 2004).

Recommendations for Future Practice

The experiences and insights given by the 8 first-year students in this study, along with a review of the literature, have shown that the support of faculty and advisors contributed to the confidence levels of students to earn a degree at the university. The role of advisors in providing structure and organization to help keep students on track to graduation was perceived to be the most valuable role of advisors and a valuable part of the overall college experience. Advisors' support and guidance contributed to the overall confidence in the students' ability to earn a degree at the institution. In consideration of these findings, the following sections offer recommendations for institutions to enhance

the academic advising experience for first-year students and promote a successful transition into higher education.

Institutional Considerations

This research study highlighted the positive impact of the advisor-student relationship on the academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students. The support and guidance offered by advisors is a key support structure for students and is a recommended component of the first-year experience. While students begin to understand the importance of this relationship during their first few terms of enrollment, it is frequently misunderstood upon transitioning into the higher education environment. Therefore, it is recommended that institutions educate students on the role of an academic advisor during the orientation process. Many of the students in this study had negative viewpoints on interactions with an advisor. Institutions need to explain the role of the academic advisor and how advisors assist students on a term-by-term basis to complete their educational goals. It is a service that all students participate in throughout their college experience, regardless of their academic performance.

The support of faculty was also a key component contributing to the confidence levels of students in this study, as well as in their transition into college. Faculty have frequent and more extensive contact than other individuals within a college or university. Their level of contact can help in identifying student issues and concerns early on in a student's tenure. Therefore, having the *right* faculty teaching first-year courses is essential to the student experience. It is recommended that institutions identify first-year faculty who can provide the level of classroom support and guidance that is necessary for

students transitioning into the higher education environment. As stated by a student in this study, “If I feel comfortable with the teacher, I love the class.”

Students in this study also discussed the role of peers in providing support and assistance in succeeding in their first term of enrollment. Collaborating on group projects, studying for exams, and working on other class assignments aided in their understanding of course material as well as encouraged camaraderie among the students. It is suggested that institutions formalize a plan to encourage peer support. This can be done by grouping students into cohorts by program major and/or organizing study groups within courses. By institutions initiating peer-to-peer contact, they can create a more inclusive environment, helping target students who are less apt to seek out peer support.

Academic Advising Department Considerations

The research questions which guided this study focused on the expectations and experiences of academic advising for first-year students. Several recommendations for academic advising departments were determined based on student feedback. A common theme in the student interviews was the availability and accessibility of advisors. Students liked knowing their advisors were always available, whether or not they needed their assistance. There was a level of comfort the students felt knowing their advisor was available should they need them. Advising departments should consider accessibility of advisors when scheduling office hours as well as the expectations of advisors for timely response to phone and email messages. Based on the opinions of the students in this study, most students still prefer face-to-face communication. Therefore, advisors should

consider the times their students are on campus when determining their weekly schedules to encourage face-to-face meetings.

Students in this research study also reported that words of encouragement they received from their advisors impacted their self efficacy beliefs and indirectly their academic success. Positive reinforcement and feedback made an impact on these first-year students. Academic advisors frequently follow up with on students having academic difficulty. This can consume much of their time as they are meeting with students on academic probation, directing students to tutoring services, or talking with faculty to monitor student progress. While providing encouragement for probation students is important, advisors should not be remiss in also providing positive feedback to those students in good academic standing.

Adjusting to a college schedule proved to be difficult for some of the students in this study. Classes in high school typically met every day. Students were challenged by the change to classes meeting only once or twice a week. In addition, some students reported difficulty in preparing for the last few weeks in the term when class projects and final exams occurred. It is recommended that advisors address these issues through the advisement process, whether it is via workshops, orientation, or individual meetings to address strategies on meeting the time demands of college-level courses.

A final recommendation for advisors is to provide students with updates on their progress in meeting graduation requirements. All of the students reported that they liked how advisors kept them on track to graduation, ensuring they complete the courses

needed to graduate. Providing students with frequent updates on their progress is also another opportunity advisors have to provide encouragement to students.

Recommendations for Further Research

While this research study provided further insight into the connection between intrusive advising and academic self efficacy beliefs of first-year students, it brought to light some considerations for further research studies. Five recommendations for further research are described below that address some of the limitations of the current study, as well as address opportunities for research revealed during the study.

This research study interviewed students at the beginning and end of the first term of enrollment, a 10-week quarter. Ten weeks is a relatively short time, limiting the number of interactions between students and advisors. Seeing that many of the students started the term with misperceptions about the role of academic advisors, the possibilities for the impact of the relationship could have been limited due to the length of the study. The time frame in which to interview the students could be expanded to a semester or the entire first year of enrollment. An expanded time frame allows for greater numbers of interactions between students and advisors, influencing the potential impact of this relationship on first-year students. In addition, retention of participants can be tracked to determine the impact of the degree of advising relationship and first-year retention.

In conjunction with the above recommendation, future research could include additional meetings between the researcher and the students. Although the students volunteered to participate in this study, some students were more apprehensive and inhibited while responding to interview questions. By expanding the number of meetings

with the students, a further rapport between the researcher and the participants can be developed. A stronger rapport with students could provide more detailed and descriptive responses.

Another limitation of this study was the low number of participants. While the participant sample was diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity, having a larger sample would add to the depth of understanding of the research questions. A larger sample could also allow for greater differentiation between recent high school graduates and adult students.

As mentioned above, the sample in this study was diverse in age. Different age groups allowed for the inclusion of multiple perspectives that may occur due to age. However, further research could be done solely on the adult student population. As this population continues to grow at American colleges and universities, a greater understanding of how to support this population is needed. Findings in this study on adult attitudes about higher education did not support previous research in this area (Risque et al., 2007-2008). Therefore, by targeting adult students and asking questions more relevant to their age group, further insight could be gained.

A final recommendation for further research would be to interview the academic advisors of the participants. Including advisors in the research would help gain their perspective on their interactions with students and lessen assumptions made by the researcher on the advisor-student relationship. It would provide a representation of steps advisors take to develop relationships with their students and allow the researcher to more accurately measure the strength of the relationships.

Conclusion

This study addressed the existing holes in the research that have been identified regarding the relationship between intrusive advising and self efficacy of first-year students. A mixed methods approach was employed, interviewing first-year students involved in intrusive advising programs and comparing those findings with results from the College Self Efficacy Inventory. First-year students in this study did experience measurable increases in both academic-course self efficacy and academic-social self efficacy upon completion of the first term of enrollment. The support of faculty, advisors, and other students contributed to the confidence levels of students to earn a degree at the university. The role of advisors in providing structure and organization to help keep students on track to graduation was perceived to be the most valuable role of advisors and a valuable part of the overall college experience. These findings support the value of academic advisors on college and university campuses.

Having started my career in higher education as an academic advisor, I experienced first-hand the impact of advising on the success of college students. I agree with Light's (2001) statement that "good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience"(p. B11). Since academic advising is a relatively new field of research, it is hoped that this study adds to the discipline, providing further support for its value on college campuses. In addition, I hope it serves as a starting point for more quantitative research, examining the specific aspects of the intrusive advising relationship that have been linked to increased retention and GPA. By

gaining a better understanding of how advising impacts retention and GPA, components of it can be mirrored in other student service areas within the university.

I would also like to thank the students who volunteered their time to participate in this study. This research would not have been possible without their commitment to the process. They took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me on two separate occasions and were open and honest in their responses to questions during our interviews. It was truly a pleasure getting to know the participants and I wish them the best of luck as they continue working towards their educational goals.

Finally, I would like to thank the participating university for allowing access to the first-year students in this study. It is because of the university's dedication to its students that I had an avenue to explore my research questions. Providing students with intrusive academic advising is a significant financial commitment by the university. This commitment has contributed to the academic success of its students.

Providing all students, regardless of age, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, an environment in which they can be academically successful should be at the forefront of all administrators and faculty at our educational institutions. It is clear through this study, as well as previous research, intrusive academic advising is a way to accomplish this goal.

APPENDIX A:
LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear First-Year Student,

I am a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago, studying under Dr. Terry E. Williams. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation during the Fall Quarter. I am inviting you to be a participant in my study titled: *The Impact of Intrusive Advising on Academic Self Efficacy Beliefs of First-Year Students in Higher Education*.

Specifically, I am interested in understanding the expectations of first-time, first-year students in relation to college, academic advising, and the belief in their ability to be academically successful. I would also like to understand how expectations compare to student experiences during the first term of enrollment.

Students are asked to participate in two parts of the study. Part 1 occurs within the first 2 weeks of the quarter and includes taking a short survey, the College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI). The survey takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. Immediately thereafter, the student will participate in an interview that will consider questions relating to student expectations. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Part 2 is similar: students will take the CSEI and participate in a second interview addressing student experiences during the first quarter. Again, this will take no more than 60-90 minutes of the student's time.

All surveys and interviews will be kept confidential and all results will be coded without the use of student names or any other identifying information. Interviews will occur in a conference room on campus. A time that is convenient for you will be scheduled to complete the survey and interview.

As a token of appreciation, you will be given a \$25 bookstore gift certificate upon completion of the second interview.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me no later than October 1st at lkemner@luc.edu or (312)935-6433. If you have any questions regarding my study, please contact me or my advisor, Dr. Terry E. Williams, at twillia@luc.edu.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kemner Miller

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: The Impact of Intrusive Advising on Academic Self Efficacy Beliefs of First-Year Students in Higher Education

Researcher(s): Lauren Kemner Miller

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Terry E. Williams

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Lauren Kemner Miller for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Terry E. Williams in the Program of Higher Education at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a first-time, first-year student at this University. There will be 12-15 participants in this research, none of which will have had prior higher education experience.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of student expectations regarding college, academic advising, and ability to be successful academically. How these things change during the first term of enrollment will be considered.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

Part 1:

- Complete a survey asking you to rate statements regarding your confidence to perform various academic tasks. Survey takes 5 minutes to complete.
- Participate in a 45-60 minute interview that includes discussions of high school experiences and college expectations.

Part 2:

- Complete the same survey taken in Part 1.
- Participate in a second 45-60 minute interview that includes discussions on college experiences during the first term of enrollment that consider academic experiences, adjusting to the college environment and academic advising.

Both interviews will occur in a conference room on campus. Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed into a Word document. Students will have an opportunity to read through the interview notes to ensure their accuracy.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the results can help provide a broader understanding of the first-year experience and campus resources that support the transition into college.

Your participation in this study will not impact your academic standing at your university in any way.

Compensation:

As a token of appreciation for participation, participants will receive a \$25 bookstore gift certificate upon completion of both interviews. No compensation will be given unless participants both interviews are completed.

Confidentiality:

- The names of participants will remain confidential at all times. Surveys and interview transcriptions will be coded with a letter and serve as the identifying factor. No names will appear on surveys or interview notes.
- Participant contact information, provided at the first interview, will be stored at the home of the researcher. This information will be discarded after a 2 year period.
- Audiotapes will be held on a secure network at all times. All documents will be stored in the home of Lauren Kemner Miller. After a 2 year time period, surveys, audiotapes and interview notes will be discarded.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Compensation will not be given without participation in both interviews.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Lauren Kemner Miller at (312)935-6433, email: lkemner@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Terry E. Williams, at twillia@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Assistant Director for Research Compliance in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your record.

_____ I agree to be contacted by the researcher for a second interview.

_____ I do not agree to be contacted by the researcher for a second interview.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C:
SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Project Title: The Impact of Intrusive Advising on Academic Self Efficacy Beliefs of First-Year Students in Higher Education

Researcher: Lauren Kemner Miller

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Terry E. Williams

Researcher Background:

This research study is being conducted by Lauren Kemner Miller for a dissertation in the Program in Higher Education at Loyola University Chicago. Ms. Miller has over ten years of experience in post-secondary administration and teaching. She currently works as the director of a first-year experience program.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of first-year student expectations regarding college, academic advising, and ability to be successful academically. How these factors change during the first term of enrollment will be considered.

Participant Selection:

A random sample of first-time, first-year students will be invited to participate in this study. Students will be contacted by email and mail, and asked to contact the researcher directly if they are interested in participating. There will be 12-15 participants in this research, none of which will have had prior higher education experience.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Students who choose to participate may decline to answer any question or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Expectations of Participants:

Participants will be asked to do the following:

Part 1: Beginning of first term of enrollment

- Complete a survey asking students to rate statements regarding their confidence to perform various academic tasks. Survey takes 5-10 minutes to complete.
- Participate in a 45-60 minute interview that includes discussions of high school experiences and college expectations.

Part 2: End of first term of enrollment

- Complete the same survey taken in Part 1.
- Participate in a second 45-60 minute interview that includes discussions on college experiences during the first term of enrollment that consider academic experiences, adjusting to the college environment and academic advising.

Both interviews will occur in a conference room on campus. Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed into a Word document. Students will have an opportunity to read through the interview notes to ensure their accuracy.

Potential Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to students from participation, but the results can help provide a broader understanding of the first-year experience and campus resources that support the transition into college and promote academic success.

Risks and Ensuring Confidentiality:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

In order to maintain the anonymity of participants the following measures will be taken:

- The names of participants will remain confidential at all times. College personnel will be unaware of students who volunteer to participate in the study.
- Surveys and interview transcriptions will be coded with a letter and serve as the identifying factor. No names will appear on surveys or interview notes.
- Audiotapes will be held on a secure network at all times. Surveys and interview notes will be secured in a locked cabinet at the home of the researcher.
- Upon 2 years after the conclusion of the research, surveys, audiotapes and interview notes will be destroyed.

Treatment of Results:

Findings from this research will be explained in full detail in the dissertation paper. Participants who wish to receive a copy of the results can request such from the researcher at the contact information listed below.

Contacts and Questions:

Questions regarding this research study should be directed to Lauren Kemner Miller at (312)935-6433, email: lkemner@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Terry E. Williams, at twillia@luc.edu.

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW 1 PROTOCOL

1) I'm interested in the expectations you have for college. Could you tell me about that?

- a. The expectations you have for your courses?
- b. How do you think your courses will be the same or different from those you took in high school?

(Research Question 4: transition into college)

2) What expectations do you have for your academic advising experience at this university?

- a. What kind of relationship do you expect to have with your advisor?
Please explain.
- b. What types of interactions do you expect to have with your advisor?
Why?
- c. How often do you anticipate being in contact with your advisor (either through face-to-face, email, or phone communication)
- d. What kinds of feedback, if any, would you like to receive?

(Research Question 1: expectations for academic advising)

3) Let's go back to your high school experience. Can you tell me about how you did academically?

- a. Were you satisfied with it?
- b. Did you think you performed as well as you could have? Why or why not?

- c. What seemed to help you succeed academically? What worked against it?

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating; Research Question 4: transition into college)

- 4) To what extent do you think you are adequately prepared for your college courses? What makes you feel this way?

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating; Question 4: transition into college)

- 5) How are you defining academic success for yourself in college? What do you expect will contribute to your academic success?

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)

- 6) Could you complete this sentence: I feel confident as a student/learner when _____. I don't feel confident as a student/learner when _____.

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)

- 7) Rate your current confidence in your ability to earn your degree at this institution on a scale from 0 to 9 (show scale). Can you help me understand your rating?

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW 2 PROTOCAL

- 1) How did things go for you this term?
 - a. Did your academic performance meet the expectations you had set for yourself? Why or why not?
 - b. To what extent do you feel you were academically successful this term? Why?
 - c. Was there anything that did or did not facilitate your academic performance?
(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)
- 2) As you look back on your first quarter in college, what thoughts do you now have on how well high school prepared you for your college courses?
(Research Question 4: transition into college)
- 3) How did your actual experiences in your classes this term compare with the expectations you held back when you began this term?
 - a. In what ways, if at all, did your expectations for your academic performance change over the quarter?
 - b. What seemed to affect your expectations that you would succeed? Not succeed?
(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)
- 4) What, if any, college resources have helped you in your transition into college?
(Research Question 4: transition into college)
- 5) What's your relationship like with your academic advisor currently?
 - a. How often and what types of interactions did you have with your advisor?
 - b. Describe any feedback you've received from your advisor during the quarter.
To what extent was this feedback useful? Please explain

c. What role will your continued relationship with your advisor have on your future college experience?

d. What's been most valuable about your meetings with your advisor?

(Research Question 4: role of academic advisor in transition)

6) How did your experiences with your advisor this quarter compare with your expectations at the beginning of the term?

a. What expectations were met? Unmet? Any surprises?

b. In what ways, if any, did your experiences with your academic advisor help you succeed academically this term?

(Research Question 1: expectations for academic advising)

7) Now that you have some college experience under your belt, let's revisit how you feel about yourself as a student/learner. Let's fill in the blank: As a student/learner, I feel confident when _____. I don't feel confident when _____.

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)

8) Now that you've experienced college, how would you rate your confidence in your ability to earn your degree at this institution on a scale from 0 to 8 (show picture of scale). Explain your rationale for this rating.

(Research Question 2: self-efficacy rating)

a. What college resources, if any, do you think influenced your rating?

(Research Question 3: influential factors)

APPENDIX F
COLLEGE SELF EFFICACY INVENTORY (CSEI)-REVISED

The College Self Efficacy Inventory

This questionnaire seek information regarding your degree of confidence in completing tasks associated with being a student at your college. You will be asked to respond to a series of statements by circling the number that best represents your present attitude or opinion. Remember this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. The answer categories range from:

0 – totally unconfident

5 – somewhat confident

1 – very unconfident

6 – confident

2 – unconfident

7 – very confident

3 – somewhat unconfident

8 – totally confident

4 – undecided

Using the scale provided please mark the number which best represents the degree to which you feel confident performing the following tasks

	Totally unconfident	Very unconfident	Unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Undecided	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident	Totally confident
Research a term paper	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Write course papers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Do well on your exams	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Take good class notes	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Keep up to date with schoolwork	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Manage time effectively	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Using the scale provided please mark the number which best represents the degree to which you feel confident performing the following tasks

	Totally unconfident	Very unconfident	Unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Undecided	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident	Totally confident
Understand your textbooks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Participate in class discussion	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ask a question in class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Talk to your professors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Talk to university staff	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ask a professor a question	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

APPENDIX G
TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

I _____ agree to transcribe the interviews for doctoral candidate Lauren Kemner Miller entitled “The Impact of Intrusive Advising on Academic Self-Efficacy Beliefs of First-Year Students in Higher Education”. I will maintain strict confidentiality of the data files and transcripts. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- I will not discuss them with anyone but the researcher.
- I will not share copies with anyone but the researcher.
- I agree to turn over all copies of the transcripts to the researcher at conclusion of the contract.
- I will destroy the audio files I receive upon conclusion of the contract.

I have read and understood the information provided above.

Transcriber’s Signature

Date

Researcher’s Signature

Date

REFERENCE LIST

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VITA

Lauren Kemner Miller earned the Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology at Loyola University Chicago. She began her career volunteering and working with abused children in various settings, including domestic violence shelters, the Child Abuse Protection Program (CAPP), and community outreach centers.

After working as a professional counselor at a Chicago-based community center, Ms. Miller changed her career focus and began working as an Academic Advisor at Robert Morris University- Illinois. In this role, she served as the Program Director for the College Prep program, a bridge program for recent high school graduates who did not meet the admission requirements of the University. She also served as the Counseling Services Liaison, directing RMU students to external counseling agencies.

Ms. Miller has served in various positions at Robert Morris University over the past eleven years, including Director of Education, overseeing all academic matters at a branch campus, Campus Director, overseeing admissions, academics, and administration at a newly opened branch campus, and Vice President of Academic Administration. After having her first child, Ms. Miller began working a reduced schedule, serving as the Director of the First-Year Experience and currently as the Director of the Title VII Grant in the Morris Graduate School of Management (RMU). She has a vast knowledge of the

higher education environment as a result of her various positions at RMU, as well as through the doctoral program in Higher Education at Loyola University Chicago.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Lauren Kemner Miller has been read and approved by the following committee:

Terry E. Williams, Ph.D., Director
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Linda Mast, Ph.D
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Director's Signature

