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Advising perceptions in Student Support Services programs

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ADVISING PERCEPTIONS IN
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
Abstract	vii
Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Significance of the Study.....	2
Rationale of the Study	3
Background of the Study	5
Scope of the Study.....	7
Tinto and Interactionalist Advising	8
Developmental Advising.....	16
O'Banion and Developmental Advising	16
Crookston and Creamer and Creamer's Developmental Advising Model.....	20
Other Kinds of Advising	21
Prescriptive Advising	22
Intrusive Advising	22
Cognitive and Psychosocial Underpinnings of Academic Advising	24
Cognitive Developmental Theory.....	24
Psychosocial Theory.....	26
Definition of Terms.....	27
Research Questions	28
Methodology	29
Population and Sample.....	29
Data Collection and Analysis	30
Limitations of the Study	31
Summary.....	31
Review of Literature.....	32
Introduction	32
TRIO and the Phases of College Retention	34
Transition to College and SSS	34
Bridge Programs	34
Orientation Programs	37
Retention in College and SSS	41
Instructional Courses, Workshops, and Cultural Events in SSS	44
Peer Tutoring and Learning Communities in SSS.....	45
Professional Advising in SSS.....	46
Developmental Advising and SSS.....	46
Intrusive Advising and SSS.....	52
Mentoring and SSS	54
Student Population Served by SSS.....	56
First-Generation College Students and SSS	59

Summary: Theory and Practice in Student Support Services	64
Theoretical Basis of SSS	64
Current TRIO and TRIO SSS Program Practice	65
Validity of Mixed Method Research Design	68
Conclusion	71
Methodology.....	75
Research Questions	75
Research Design.....	76
Intricacy of Mixed Method Research Design	76
Population and Sample	78
Advisor Sample	79
Student Sample	80
Data Collection.....	82
Academic Advising Inventory.....	83
Data Analysis	88
Data Analysis for Qualitative Data.....	88
Trustworthiness	89
Triangulation	90
Peer Debriefing.....	91
Thick Description	91
Data Analysis for Quantitative Data.....	91
Established Reliability and Validity of AAI.....	92
Authenticity and Trustworthiness of the AAI Observation Protocol.....	94
Pilot Study I	94
Pilot Study II.....	97
Methodology to Address Each Research Question	100
Limitations of the Study	101
Conclusion	102
Findings.....	103
Case Study of Metropolitan University	103
Research Question One – MU	104
Research Question Two – MU	110
Research Question Three – MU	113
Research Question Four – MU	116
Research Question Five – MU.....	120
Case Study of Southern Community College	123
Research Question One – SCC	125
Research Question Two – SCC	127
Research Question Three – SCC	129
Research Question Four – SCC.....	131
Research Question Five – SCC.....	135
Case Study of University of State	139
Research Question One – US	140
Research Question Two – US.....	145
Research Question Three – US.....	147

Research Question Four – US	150
Research Question Five – US	153
Conclusion	157
Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions.....	158
Purpose of the Study.....	158
Discussion	158
Research Question One	158
Research Question Two	174
Research Question Three.....	175
Research Question Four	177
Research Question Five.....	181
Recommendations for Practice.....	183
Recommendations for Research.....	184
Concluding Remarks	186
References.....	187
Appendix A: Consent Form.....	194
Appendix B: Academic Advising Inventory	195
Appendix C: Original Advisor Checklist and Observation Sheet	202
Appendix D: Revised Advisor Checklist and Observation Sheet.....	203
Vita.....	205

Abstract

This study seeks to understand the perceptions of advisors and students about the TRIO Student Support Services they provide or receive, with particular attention to how their perceptions relate to best practice theories of developmental and prescriptive advising behaviors. By comparing the perceptions of stakeholders to the theory behind the services, a better understanding of the current advising practice of Student Support Services (SSS) is obtained. Data for this study were derived from the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI), a compilation of both advisors' and students' perceptions of services in SSS. Observations and quantitative data were used in this study.

Five advisors and 25 students from three institutions participated in this study. Advisors and students overwhelmingly perceived developmental advising in observed advising sessions; however, advisors' and students' scores widely ranged. Advisors tended to overscore their advising behavior and students tended to underscore their advisors' advising behavior. Inconsistencies were detected of perceptions of topic/activity frequency between advisors, students and me. Students also reported being "very satisfied" with the advising services they received in the SSS programs.

Results of this study can be used to: 1) identify optimum advising behaviors in Student Support Services; 2) raise the importance and recognition level on the differences and similarities of advisor and student perceptions of services which can and do have an impact on the creation of advising policies; 3) recognize and understand kinds of discrepancies and homogeneity of advisor and student perceptions of advising services to assist and support the needs of disadvantaged students; 4) assess, design or revise advising training programs for SSS advisors and possibly for campus-wide advisor training programs as well.

Introduction

As an advisor in a TRIO program, I will never truly understand the impact that my services have had on my student advisees. Every now and then, students may return to my office to express their gratitude for the role that I, as an advisor, played in their subsequent academic success. Such a visit may occur at some milestone in their academic career, such as at graduation or acceptance into a competitive degree program. Otherwise, and for the most part, most students come and go, and I, as an advisor, never truly come to understand the part that I played in helping students achieve their academic goals.

The same holds true for my relationship with at-risk students. Most of the time, at-risk students receive Student Support Services (SSS) advising and then move on, never to be seen nor heard from again. Very often, at-risk students themselves do not understand what their academic journey would have been like without this significant person—their SSS advisor—in their lives. At-risk students, like all students, need advisement in order to become academically and socially integrated into post-secondary education (Tinto, 1975). Student Support Services programs were created, in part, to address the special needs of at-risk students and to offer guidance directing them to earning a baccalaureate degree (Burd, 1999; Devaries, 2002; Frost, 1993; Laff, 1994; Thayer, 2000). At present, however, research has not fully explored how successful such services were and whether or not both the advisor and the advisee thought that the support helped in any way. Apart from some anecdotal evidence, and the occasional feedback offered to advisors from the individual, there is no consistent record of advisor and student perceptions of the value of SSS. Finally, there is little awareness, either by advisor or student, concerning the extent to which the services offered complied with or varied from the developmental and prescriptive theory that underlies the administration of such services.

Purpose of the Study

In order to address the void in the literature regarding SSS effectiveness, this study presents the views of advisors and students in SSS, with the specific goal of identifying the kind and quality of advising practices employed by SSS advisors in their work with at-risk students. This study also aims to interpret the perceptions of advisors and at-risk students regarding SSS advising services, and, to measure the extent to which the services reflect developmental and prescriptive advising theory. The purpose of this study, therefore, is threefold: To understand how advisors perceive Student Support Services, to understand how student advisees perceive Student Support Services and to determine, from those responses, the degree to which current practice in Student Support Services relates to theories regarding developmental and prescriptive advising.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to improve the provision, execution, and assessment of Student Support Services. These services have already been shown to greatly impact the retention rate of at-risk and low-income students. It is believed that SSS helps students persist in education because the advising takes into account a comprehensive view of the student, covering financial aid, career concerns, personal issues, and transfer and graduate school counseling as well (Burd, 1999; Devaries, 2002; Frost, 1993; Laff, 1994; Thayer, 2000). Although student experience in advising has been investigated previously, most of the research has focused on quantitative reports from students focusing on student satisfaction with advising services. Until now, specific research on Student Support Services advising has been limited. Most Student Support Services research has quantitatively studied the program's general effectiveness, without focusing on the advising behaviors demonstrated in SSS practice. Through observation of advising sessions and utilizing an advising survey, this study will

develop a greater understanding of SSS practice (Burd, 1999; Devaries, 2002; Frost, 1993; Laff, 1994; Thayer, 2000). The results of the study can be used for several areas in higher education. First, the results can be used to identify optimum advising behaviors in the context of Student Support Services programs. Second, results can help higher educators to recognize and understand advisor and student perceptions of the advising behaviors found in SSS. Third, results can aid in understanding how these behaviors and perceptions can impact future policies on additional services that might be developed to assist and support disadvantaged college students. Finally, study results can aid in training SSS advisors.

Rationale for the Study

Just as academic advising has gone through great changes in recent years, so has the overall composition of the average collegiate student body. In recent years, college education in the United States has evolved to include a diverse population of incoming students, including women, minority groups, low-income students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities. With the desire by all students to gain a college education, these changing populations have also included another category of student, the at-risk student. Studies have shown that at-risk students carry with them a record of experiences and achievements that leaves them vulnerable to failure in college. At-risk students tend to have less academic preparation for college and generally experience less fruitful integration on college campuses (Devarics, 1997; Fields, 2001; Thayer, 2000). Differences in ethnicity, culture, gender, previous family college experience, income, and socioeconomic background exacerbate their issues. As a result, at-risk students may feel like they do not fit in at college, and they are therefore less likely to engage in behaviors that will improve their sense of belonging to the institution. As such, these students evidence poor retention in college for both academic and social reasons (Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan & Goodwin, 1998).

Today, colleges are trying to assist their new at-risk populations. Some institutions hire outside professional researchers to study the institution and determine how they can improve their retention rate among at-risk students. Others have added orientation programs, while others have sought to understand the process of attrition itself (Tinto, 1999). That said, Tinto (1999) argues that most current retention programs for at-risk students are merely “add-on” programs which do not take the problem seriously enough. This is most likely due to an underlying perception that perhaps at-risk students cannot be helped. A study by Abrams and Jernigan (1984), however, found that at-risk and disadvantaged students can be just as successful in college as any other student population. The study confirmed that if students are offered and seek out advising services, they can be successful in college, which supports offering further services to at-risk students.

Another reason the attrition rate of at-risk students has not declined is that colleges have done little to change the overall character of college life. Tinto (1999) argues this is due primarily to the fact that few colleges have looked at the institutional conditions which promote student retention, including: information/advice, support, involvement, and learning. If colleges offer more or all of these benefits, at-risk student retention will improve. The Student Support Services programs were established specifically to help at-risk students complete their post-secondary education (Tinto, 1999). The nature and development of the SSS programs has made it responsive to improvement efforts for these services over the years. A study which determines still other ways in which SSS can be improved will likely lead to the improved success rate of Student Support Services. Indeed, an improved Student Support Services may model all other efforts to improve the retention of at-risk students.

Background of the Study

In order to properly understand the views of advisors and students involved in Student Support Services, it is necessary to contextualize the current state of practice by providing a short survey of the history and mission of Student Support programs. The TRIO programs began in 1964 with the establishment of Upward Bound, a program for at-risk students that emerged from the Educational Opportunity Act in the context of President Lyndon Johnson's policy conventionally termed "the war on poverty." TRIO programming was expanded when, in 1965, as part of the Higher Education Act, the Educational Talent Search program was added. The Higher Education Act also soon after yielded the third program to make up TRIO, the Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, and, as a result, by the late 1960s the combination of these three programs were generally termed the "TRIO" programs (Wolanin, 1997).

TRIO programs have further expanded in the years since in order to offer a broader range of services and reach more students who need assistance in their education. A fourth program, Educational Opportunity Centers, was placed under the TRIO umbrella in 1972 as part of amendments to the Higher Education Act. Though this program and other programs were added to TRIO, the TRIO name developed in the late 1960s to describe the original three programs and continues to be used. When additional educational amendments were added to the Higher Education Act in 1976, the Training Program for Special Programs Staff and Leadership Personnel was added to TRIO (McCrimmon, 1998). A sixth program, the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program, was created in 1986, with funding first being appropriated for its implementation in 1989. In 1990, the Upward Bound/Math/Science program was created by the Department of Education, to address the pressing need for improved instruction in the fields of mathematics and science. This program was initially an experimental program, but because of its success has continued to be funded. At the same time, a Veterans

Upward Bound program was created in order to help armed services veterans learn how to secure proper educational support owed them from a range of available sources including the federal Veterans' Administration, veterans' associations nationwide, and various state and local agencies that serve veterans (Office of Higher Education Programs, 2001).

Due to the continued success of the TRIO programs, further Higher Education Act amendments were added in 1998. The amendments authorized the TRIO Dissemination Partnership Program to encourage the replication of successful TRIO programs in all institutions and agencies of the government, by providing opportunities and incentives for adapting TRIO program components, practices, strategies and activities in those institutions and agencies (Office of Higher Education Programs, 2001).

All of the TRIO programs, in one way or other, are designed to provide advisors with the capacity to support and motivate at-risk students from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve success in their academic life from middle school through college. In sum, "TRIO programs are designed to identify promising students (Talent Search), prepare them to go to college (Upward Bound), provide them with information on academic and financial aid opportunities (for getting into college) (Educational Opportunity Centers), and provide tutoring and support services to students once they reach campus (Student Support Services)" (Wolanin, 1997, p. 11). The special focus of this study is the Student Support Services program, the third TRIO program developed, the main goal of which is to help participants in the program earn a college degree. In order to do so, SSS provides assists students with the basic requirements of college and helps motivate students toward the successful completion of college. The special goal of SSS is to increase college retention, that is, to improve the graduation rate of its participants, by facilitating the transitions faced by students going into and through the college years. This goal is achieved by providing a battery of services to participating students, including academic,

financial or personal counseling. Under academic counseling, SSS provides students with instruction in mathematics through the pre-calculus level, laboratory science, foreign languages, writing composition, and literature, as well as the basic study skills necessary for success in academics beyond the high school level. Financial counseling entails advisement on the opportunities available for financial aid to go to college, as well as direct involvement in helping students secure admission to college and financial assistance for college, graduate or professional programs. Personal advisement under SSS may involve anything from providing information about career options, to providing students opportunities to be exposed to a wider variety of cultural events (Office of Higher Education Programs, 2001).

In order for a student to be eligible for SSS services, he or she must first be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a program of post-secondary education at an institution that offers an SSS program. The student must also be either from a low-income family, a first-generation college student, or have a disability. In any given SSS program, regulations stipulate that two-thirds of the participants in the program must be either first-generation college students from low-income families or disabled. Of the students with disabilities, at least one-third must also qualify as low-income (Office of Higher Education Programs, 2001).

Scope of the Study

In order for Student Support Services to be deemed effective by educational researchers, they must connect in some way to the current theoretical frameworks addressing the problem of the attrition and retention of students in post-secondary education. To fully understand the relationship of Student Support Services program to theory, it is necessary to briefly review the retention theories related to the relevance of advising and various advising models that have evolved as a result of years of practice, which include interactionalist, developmental, prescriptive, intrusive, cognitive, and psychosocial orientations of advising.

In particular, this section reviews Tinto's (1975) interactionalist model describing attrition and retention of students in colleges. Further, it notes some limitations of Tinto's theory as it might be applied to Student Support Services and describes the relationship of Tinto's theory to Student Support Services. It then reviews O'Banion's (1972) theory of retention and likewise considers its relevance to a study of the effectiveness of a Student Support Services advisement program, as well as additions to the construct of developmental advising by Crookston (1972) and by Creamer and Creamer (1994). Prescriptive, cognitive and psychosocial theories of advising will also be reviewed.

Tinto and Interactionalist Advising

Tinto's (1975) interactionalist retention theory takes into account how various aspects of a student's profile and life impact the likelihood of his or her retention in college. These factors include: the student's entry characteristics, the degree of success of the student's academic and social integration into the life of the university, and, as a result, the level of commitment and persistence in desire to graduate develops in the student.

In order to accurately relate advising services to Tinto's (1975) theory of retention, this study reviews the literature which has presented empirical studies testing the value of various itemized propositions summarizing Tinto's contentions. Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) list 15 propositions that are revealed in Tinto's 1975 interactionalist theory. The 13 primary and two additional propositions are as follows:

1. Student entry characteristics affect the level of initial commitment to the institution.
2. Student entry characteristics affect the level of initial commitment to the goal of graduation from college.
3. Student entry characteristics directly affect the student's likelihood of persistence in college.

4. Initial commitment to the goal of graduation from college affects the level of academic integration.
5. Initial commitment to the goal of graduation from college affects the level of social integration.
6. Initial commitment to the institution affects the level of social integration.
7. Initial commitment to the institution affects the level of academic integration.
8. The greater the level of academic integration, the greater the level of subsequent commitment to the goal of graduation from college.
9. The greater the level of social integration, the greater the level of subsequent commitment to the institution.
10. The initial level of institutional commitment affects the subsequent level of institutional commitment.
11. The initial level of commitment to the goal of graduation from college affects the subsequent level of commitment to the goal of college graduation.
12. The greater the level of subsequent commitment to the goal of college graduation, the greater the likelihood of student persistence in college.
13. The greater the level of subsequent commitment to the institution, the greater the likelihood of student persistence in college.
14. A high level of commitment to the goal of graduation from college compensates for a low level of commitment to the institution, and vice versa, in influencing student persistence in college.
15. A high level of academic integration compensates for a low level of social integration, and vice versa, in influencing student persistence in college (p. 112).

There have been a number of studies examining Tinto's (1975) model. On the basis of Tinto's model and its propositions, a number of studies have attempted to 1) validate the propositions, 2) empirically study the validity of such propositions in actual student life, and/or 3) propose advising services based on these propositions, that will assist students in either building upon or counteracting the lack of the stated characteristics believed to lead to success in post-secondary education.

Some studies have reviewed Tinto's (1975) propositions, in order to assess the magnitude of the empirical validation of each proposition and to thereby evaluate the overall internal empirical consistency of Tinto's theoretical model as a whole. To this end, Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson (1997) conducted a review of all of Tinto's 15 propositions through empirical studies on the single- and multiple-institutional level and found that the tests strongly supported, on either the single- or multiple-institution level, only nine of the 15 propositions, including propositions 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 (as listed above). Of these nine propositions, moreover, only two – propositions – 10 and 11 – were supported both in the single-university tests and in the multi-institutional tests. A later study found just as limited a connection between Tinto's model and empirical reality. Elkins, Braxton, and James (2000) concluded that only four of the original 13 propositions possessed a strong empirical backing. The four propositions confirmed by their study were: student entry characteristics affect initial commitments to the institution, initial commitments to the institution influence subsequent levels of institutional commitment, social integration positively influences subsequent institutional commitment, which, in turn, positively affects the likelihood of a student's persistence in college (Elkins et al., 2000) In other words, this study only confirmed propositions 1, 9, 11 and 13.

In addition to those studies which test the validity of Tinto's (1975) model, either in part or whole, other researchers have extracted certain variables from Tinto in order to study their

relevance to student persistence in college. Many more studies have, with a great deal of attention, focused on further variations that Tinto had not touched upon, related to factors of ethnicity and environment in college life today. For example, Tinto, Braxton, Vesper and Hossler (1995) examined six of Tinto's propositions and then measured them against three categories of expectations about college, including expectations of academic and intellectual development, expectations regarding the atmosphere of the college, and expectations of career development after college. In their study the authors found that one of Tinto's propositions—initial commitment to the institution—had a direct positive impact on these expectations. Moreover, the study also found that if these expectations are met as a student proceeds through college, they become much more highly integrated into college life, both academically and socially—a critical Tinto factor for retention. Further, attaining such a level of integration early, the authors also found, had a direct impact on later levels of institutional commitment. Finally, all of the above categories of expectations were found to have an additional direct impact on the forming of goals leading to graduation (Braxton et al., 1995).

Another study, conducted by Pascarella, Duby, and Iverson (1983), also viewed some of Tinto's (1975) propositions generally and found that there were significant interactions between social and academic integration, and also between commitment to the institution and to one's goals. Moreover, important variables were found in the interaction of social and academic integration factors. If a student had low levels of academic integration, then social integration was very important to that student. If, however, he or she had a high level of academic integration, social integration was less critical. Moreover, if a student had a high level of commitment to the goal of graduating, then that commitment tended to compensate for a low level of commitment to the institution. The importance of this study, with regard to advising, is

that it indicates that the effects of major components of Tinto's model on persistence and commitment may not be independent of each other (Pascarella et al., 1983).

Another area of study to emerge from the use of Tinto's (1975) model is that of classroom culture and its impact on persistence toward graduation. Braxton, Milem, and Sullivan (2000) measured six of Tinto's factors against four active-learning behaviors by the faculty. The definition of active-learning used in the study corresponded to measures defined by Bonwell and Eison (1991) and include class discussion, knowledge-level exam questions, group work, and higher-order thinking activities. Another study by Elkins et al. (2000) found that class discussion and higher order thinking activities did prove statistically significant to social integration. That is, "Class discussions positively influenced persistence... (and) both social integration and subsequent institutional commitment exert positive effective on student decisions to remain in their chosen collegiate institution" (p. 580). Class discussion was also found to yield statistically significant effects on the student's intent to return to college next year and on institutional commitment (Elkins et al., 2000), both of which impact their ultimate persistence in college.

In addition to the above, others studies have used Tinto's (1975) factors in order to judge the effectiveness of college orientation programs. In one study, Pascarella, Terenzini, and Wolfe (1986) found that only three of Tinto's factors ultimately affected persistence in college, including social integration, goal commitment and institutional commitment. More pointedly, the study found that an orientation offered by a college had no effect on ultimate persistence, but did affect social integration and institutional commitment. The authors also found that initial goal commitment had an indirect effect on persistence negotiated mainly through social integration and subsequent goal commitment. Specifically, "The indirect effects of both academic and social integration were mediated primarily through their positive influence on

institutional commitment” (p. 167). Pascarella et al. (1986) found that an orientation programs had a positive effect because the orientation programs was modeled to enhance social integration and institutional commitment and their effect on persistence. The orientation program had a positive effect because activities surrounded social integration and heighten institutional commitment.

More recent studies are based on the recognition the limitations of Tinto’s (1975) model. Tinto himself noted the limitations of his model, indicating that

First, the model does not give sufficient emphasis to the role of finances in student decisions concerning higher education persistence. Second, it does not adequately distinguish between those behaviors that lead to institutional transfer and those that result in permanent withdrawal from higher education. Third, it fails to highlight the important differences in education careers that mark the experiences of students of different gender, race and social status backgrounds. Finally, it is not very sensitive to forms of disengagement that occur within the two-year college sector (p. 689).

Following from this statement, some studies have looked more closely at variables in student makeup which may or may not affect their persistence in college. Pascarella et al., (1983) found that female students tend to persist in college at a statistically higher rate than male students. The findings also showed that students’ “entering commitment to the institution had a direct effect on academic integration rather than on social integration; and academic integration, rather than social integration, had a direct effect on subsequent institutional commitment” (p. 95). In a study of students at an American Indian college, Tierney (1992) found that such students have trouble assimilating into the mainstream of college life, and because they are drawn back to their own culture, experience difficulty in social integration at college. For cultural reasons as well Native American students have trouble adjusting to the competitive

climate of the mainstream university, as they have grown up without competition, a notion foreign to their culture. For these cultural reasons, Native American students have trouble gaining social and academic integration and as a result have poor commitment to the institution and are therefore in danger of dropping out (Tierney, 1992).

Looking more carefully at the mainstream population, other studies have found even more detailed variables which may or may not invalidate some of Tinto's (1975) factors. For example, a study conducted by Pascarella et al. (1983) tested Tinto's (1975) model in the context of a non-residential university setting. The study found that, in such a setting, only three of Tinto's factors relate to persistence. Background characteristics, intention to graduate, and social and academic integration in the institutions impacted the persistence of the population of non-residential students. The most significant variable was background characteristics, with gender and aptitude weighing in most heavily. In a related study, Newman (1985) researched a group of students from a two-year non-residential college, all of whom were deemed at-risk. The study tracked students who graduated from college and then compared their responses to questions about their experience to similar responses by students who did not graduate. The research showed that those students who did succeed had consistently made use of the metaphor of having successfully "made the passage" of transitions in college life and that this phrasing suggested a commitment to the institution. By contrast, the author of a commuter college study found that social integration correlated negatively with persistence. This finding indicates that different kinds of institutions yield different kinds of empirical support for Tinto's model. That is, social integration may have a different aspect relative to persistence, when achieved at a commuter as opposed to a residential college (Pascarella et al., 1983).

All of the cited studies tested Tinto's (1975) model either directly or indirectly and studied additional variables that may or may not contribute to persistence. Most importantly, a

number of these studies looked at how various strategies undertaken by colleges, from orientation to changing classroom culture, can improve student persistence. For that reason, the literature on Tinto's model would seem to serve as a conceptual framework for any topic regarding efforts by colleges to improve student retention, including Student Support Services. By using the factors derived from Tinto's model, it is possible for an advisor in particular to formulate a plan for a student that will enhance those factors—from social and academic integration, to commitment to institution and graduation—which have been shown to strengthen the persistence of students (Braxton et al., 1995; Braxton et al., 1997; Elkins et al., 2000; Newman, 1985; Pascarella et al., 1983, Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1982; Tinto, 1988; Tinto, 1999). The robust empirical support for Tinto's model in all higher education categories is essential, then, to the conceptual framework of this study of the effectiveness of all TRIO and SSS programs.

Finally, relative to a study of Student Support Services, it is of critical importance that Tinto's (1982) model has acknowledged, "Does not give sufficient emphasis to the role of finances in student decisions concerning higher educational persistence" (p. 689). Because all students who received Student Support Services under TRIO have to be of low-income socioeconomic status, a great deal of time in advisement is spent seeking ways to overcome financial barriers to college persistence. That is, financial considerations are of paramount importance in every decision made about college by a low-income student, and a model that does not take this into consideration has obvious limitations when applied to a body of low-income students such as those advised in the Student Support Services program. For that reason, other advising models must be synthesized with Tinto, in order to more properly describe the reality of persistence in low-income students.

Developmental Advising

O'Banion and Developmental Advising

In contrast to Tinto (1975), O'Banion (1972) established a more holistic model for advising, taking into account several elements overlooked by Tinto in his model. O'Banion identified five elements that he felt were critical to developmental advising, including exploration of life goals, exploration of vocational goals, program choice, course choice, and scheduling courses. In his work, O'Banion provides a definition of advising that is quite different from typical notions of academic advising. He states "The purpose of academic advising is to help the student choose a program of study which will serve him in the development of his total potential" (O'Banion, 1972, p. 62). Most advising programs, he argues, begin with the program choice and proceed, making what O'Banion explains is a damaging assumption that the student has already chosen his area of vocational interest and program of study. But more often than not, a student has not adequately explored his or her life and vocational goals, and these areas must be probed if an advisement program is to be successful (O'Banion, 1972).

"Developmental advising" is O'Banion's (1972) term for a course of advising which does indeed explore the student's life and vocational goals before choosing a program of study. For developmental advising, an advisor must develop new skills and knowledge not previously required in other kinds of advising. For example, in order to help a student explore his or her life goals, the advisor must obtain knowledge of the student's characteristics and previous development, an appreciation of individual differences, a belief in the worth and dignity of all men and a belief that all students have potential (O'Banion, 1972).

In order to gain these skills, an advisor must not only have studied psychology and sociology, but have skills in counseling techniques, including a clear understanding of the

vagaries of the decision-making process (O'Banion, 1972). The advisor's knowledge of psychology and sociology will help him or her understand the cognitive stages through which the student is progressing, as well as any sociological forces that may be impacting the student's commitment to his or her goals. The advisor's understanding of decision-making skills is important in so far as it is necessary to avoid making quick decisions in counseling and acknowledge that coming to an important decision is an extensively, prolonged process. Finally, counseling techniques help an advisor use reflective and non-judgmental language toward students' thoughts and feelings. These skills have also trained an advisor to see all students as individuals and appreciate their differences. That is, the advisor must be able to appreciate a student's life goals even if he or she disagrees with them. Moreover, even if the student is struggling, or performed poorly on a standardized test, the advisor must have the skills to steer clear of judgmental language which would derail the advising process (O'Banion, 1972).

When it comes to the advisor helping the student explore his or her vocational goals, the advisor must bring to the process additional skills and knowledge (O'Banion, 1972). The advisor must have knowledge of vocational fields, skills in interpreting the results of various vocational tests, and a clear understanding of the changing nature of work in any vocation in our society in order to properly advise the student. Acknowledging that it is impossible for an advisor to know everything about every vocation, O'Banion still holds advisors accountable to the responsibility of having at least a basic level understanding of the career requirements of notable fields. This level of knowledge is important if only to allow the advisors to point their advisees in the direction of more in depth information. It is important for an advisor to be able to interpret the results of any personality or career test related to vocational fields as outcomes on these tests shape a student's decision-making process and offers students an opportunity to verbalize problems or surprises on the tests (O'Banion, 1972).

Further, it is important for an advisor to keep abreast of changes in the job market relative to the variability and cycles of professions and vocations in order to offer his or her advisees effective advice in any given school year. The supply and demand of teachers, nurses, information specialists, and others are in constant flux in current business climates, and the advisor must be aware of these fluctuations in order to advise students properly. Finally, it is necessary for the advisor to value all fields of work, in order not to be swayed by his or her own prejudices as to what constitutes a good job, and lead an advisee away from goals that may be very different from those of the advisor. No matter what the student wishes to explore, the advisor should be encouraging, so that the student can determine which profession or occupation is most suited for him- or herself (O'Banion, 1972).

O'Banion (1972) believes an advisor must also be well-grounded in his or her knowledge of the program choices open to the student. This means that "the advisor must be aware of the programs available in the college, as well as knowledge of the university requirements to take such programs, knowledge of how others have performed in such programs, and knowledge of how those who succeeded in the program did in obtaining their subsequent career goals" (O'Banion, 1972, p. 64). If the student must transfer to another institution in order to obtain the training he or she requires for a professional goal, the advisor must be knowledgeable of the transfer process as well. If an advisor has knowledge of the success rate of those who entered the program, and what kinds of employment they gained after completing the program, this too will help the advisee make a sound decision.

On the basis of this knowledge the student will choose a program. It is at that point where the tasks of more traditional advising come into play. This corresponds to O'Banion's (1972) fourth area of advisor expertise, course choice. O'Banion lists seven skills or types of knowledge or attitudes that an advisor must possess in order to help students. These include

“knowledge of courses available, knowledge of special information regarding courses, rules and regulations of the college regarding suspension, knowledge of honors or remedial courses, knowledge of the instructors at the institutions and their teaching style, knowledge of course content, and, finally, knowledge of the student’s ability, as measured by test scores and records, in order to properly match the student with offered courses” (O’Banion, 1972, p. 64). For the process of course selection to be effective, O’Banion argues that an advisor must be able to explain what courses are available to a student, how those courses will contribute to their progress toward a degree, if there is any special information about the course that students need to know before taking the course, and what are the prerequisites for the course. All of these factors must be knowledgeably discussed prior to the student enrolling in a course. If a student happens to be in jeopardy of suspension due to academic difficulties, then the advisor needs to know how the university’s rules affect student decisions. It is also necessary that the advisor know about the remedial courses as well as the honors courses offered by the university in order to help the student navigate the progression toward graduation. If a college places students in honors courses on the basis of standardized tests, as is commonly the case, then the advisor needs to know this in order to avoid advising a student to sign up for a course for which he or she is ineligible. An advisor should know the student’s record in order to help him or her make clearer recommendations as to course enrollment. Finally, it is necessary that an advisor have a firm grasp of the content of different courses and the teaching styles of different teachers, in order to properly match the student’s learning style with the teacher’s and thus improve the chances of success in the course. All of these detailed factors, O’Banion argues, are essential to the professional conduct of good advising.

Finally, O’Banion (1972) also argues that the advising process should include detailed discussion regarding the scheduling of courses. For this purpose, an advisor also needs to know

the current status and any changes in the scheduling of courses, as well as know the work and commuting requirements of each course. It is important that the advisor knows what kind of schedule the student desires and how flexible or not the student is with regard to registering for courses, based on their personal or work commitments. If the student is a commuter, then the advisor needs to be aware and advise the student to schedule courses around these time restraints (O'Banion, 1972).

With all of these additional responsibilities, O'Banion (1972) clearly sees advising as a quite personal process in which the advisor must come to know much about a student's life in order to properly advise him or her. Moreover, the advisor must be something of an expert on the offerings of a college and every aspect of a course from content to schedule in order to advise a student properly. That said, O'Banion then concludes that it is ultimately the students who must choose a course of study and make a final decision, that is, advisors are to advise and not decide. Advisors do not tell students what to think or feel, but are there merely to aid the student through the process of getting to their life's goal.

Crookston and Creamer and Creamer's Developmental Advising Models

In addition to O'Banion (1972), other researchers have extended developmental advising to include further nuances. Crookston (1972), expanding upon O'Banion's notion of developmental advising, claims that advising should not only be concerned with course and career decisions, but also assist in "facilitating the student's rational process, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness, problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" (p. 13). While the advisor is helping the student decide on what courses to take, or what career to pursue, he or she should also be making use of advising techniques that will help the student think rationally about the decisions that need to be made, and improve their ability in problem-solving and decision-making.

Creamer and Creamer (1994) also build on O'Banion's (1972) work but argue that, again, as advisors help students make decisions about courses and careers, the advisor should also be helping the student set a life goal, build self-esteem, broaden his or her interests, encourage the establishment of meaningful interpersonal relationships, clarify issues regarding personal values and their lifestyle, and, finally, enhance the student's critical thinking and reasoning skills.

Creamer and Creamer define developmental academic advising as "the use of interactive teaching, counseling and administrative strategies to assist students to achieve specific learning, developmental, career and life goals" (p. 19). As such, the authors envision advising as consisting of practices derived from different theoretical domains. Thus, the advisor makes use of teaching strategies in order to help the advisees solve their problems and come to decisions, counseling strategies to uncover their learning styles and help the student gain insight into what works and does not work for them, and administrative strategies in order to arrange any involvement of other individuals, groups, departments, or other units of the university in the student's decision-making process that may be needed to ensure the student successfully reach his or her academic goals.

Other Kinds of Advising

In response to these hybrid methodologies, some researchers continue to discuss which discipline best informs the advising process. Kadar (2001) argues that the advising role is most effectively served by counselors rather than by faculty members. Faculty members tend to be primarily concerned with academic matters and focus on making sure that students are meeting the general educational as well as specific curricular requirements of a department or program. But faculty advisors are also often less concerned, and not usually equipped to deal with, other issues important to students. Counselors, on the other hand, have been trained to understand that students have many more concerns than the purely academic, including personal, career,

financial, and family concerns, all of which impact academic progress. Along these lines, it is arguable that both Tinto's, (1975) and O'Banion's, (1972) and others' developmental advising models are structured by an overriding concern with academic issues. In order to measure the effectiveness of Student Support Services on theoretical grounds, it is therefore also necessary to survey advising models, which are not focused necessarily on academic concerns but rather focused on a question and answer session.

Prescriptive Advising

Another type of advising that has received attention in the literature, albeit increasingly negative, is prescriptive advising. As described by Herndon, Kaiser, and Creamer (1996) prescriptive describing involves a uni-directional method designed to answer specific questions that students may have on such topics as courses, majors, or institutional procedures for dropping courses. The specificity of prescriptive advising is believed to give structure to students' thinking about their coursework. Prescriptive advising is also highly goal-oriented, focused on ensuring that students are doing the work needed to complete the requirements for graduation. Because this kind of advising is focused on the relationship of the student's current work to the requirements needed for graduation, prescriptive advising does not entail teaching the student new things about him- or herself, but simply, according to Earl (1988), helping ensure that the student is completing the degree requirements needed for graduation.

However, most traditional advising is of a prescriptive nature. Whereas prescriptive advising is a specific kind of problem-oriented advising, it is gradually being replaced by a more holistic, student oriented developmental advising style.

Intrusive Advising

Another, more specific kind of advising is intrusive advising, which in the literature refers to specific intervention strategies (Appleton, 1983; Glennen, 1975; Tinto, 1975; Voewll &

Karst, 1987). Earl (1988) defines intrusive advising as advising which “utilizes the systematic skills of prescriptive advising while helping to solve the major problem of developmental advising, which is the student’s reluctance to self-reference” (p. 28). Intrusive advisors start from the premise that most students do not know what they need in order to finish college and that the advisor must step in to direct them through the diverse offices and services available to them, to help them along (Earl, 1988). A premise of intrusive advising is that many students do not self-refer and are therefore not only not aware that they are in need of assistance, but also do not know of any services that might help them.

Earl (1988) argues that intrusive advising continues the work of different advising models or programs that have been developed to deal with problems leading to attrition in four different stages. Different kinds of models and approaches have been developed, related to four stages of university commitment, in order to decrease attrition. The first stage of attrition policy entails predictive models to foretell academic difficulties; the second stage of treatment includes programs that try to actively improve specific skills and include orientation classes, study skill units, and academic success groups. The third stage of programming encompasses campus-wide retention efforts, focusing on creating good faculty-student relationships. Finally, the fourth stage of programming against attrition features the university’s commitment to hiring more and appropriate personnel to take care of the problem. As a specific methodology, intrusive advising “is clearly the type of action-oriented response that produced during the second stage” (Earl, 1988, p. 29). That said, it draws elements from programs from other stages in so far as it provides a diagnostic model to pinpoint problems, places a premium on the importance of a good student-faculty relationship (if only to better address scheduling needs), and stresses the importance of having trained professionals with relevant experience in advising in order for advising to be effective. Though intrusive advising differs organizationally from both

developmental and prescriptive advising—in so far as the advisor contacts the student intrusively and actively participates in services—it nonetheless draws values from both the developmental and prescriptive advising models. Moreover, once the student is called in by intrusive advising, the advisor may use both the developmental or prescriptive model in the advising process.

Finally, Earl (1988) argues that intrusive advising does increase the retention rate of students who are in an academic crisis. Intrusive advising is particularly useful in improving student motivation as its intervention techniques are designed to allow advisors to identify student weaknesses, so that students may seek out academic assistance early enough to forestall course failure.

Cognitive and Psychosocial Underpinnings of Academic Advising

A common theme running through Tinto's (1972, 1982, 1988, 1999) work, as well as developmental and intrusive advising theory, is that advising is not simply about the academic concerns of students. Effective advising must also take into consideration personal and social factors that impact the student's academic life. As a result, most advising models now call for a holistic approach to advising. On a theoretical level, such a concern necessitates that the cognitive and psychosocial development of students be considered in order for advising to be able to claim that it is dealing with the whole being of the student. In order to fully appreciate the potential of advising, it is necessary to briefly sketch the outlines of cognitive developmental theories and psychosocial theories regarding the development of students.

Cognitive Developmental Theory

Cognitive developmental theories are concerned with how students think and reason and perceive themselves. Cognitive theories recognize a norm of human development and argue that students have decision-making abilities which do and do not correspond to the norm of cognitive skill that might be expected of a student of their age and developmental stage (Perry, 1981).

Typical of a cognitive theory is the law of human development outlined by Chickering (1969) in *Education and Identity*. According to Chickering, “Development occurs through cycles of differentiation and integration” (p. 292) of experiences. Moreover, the particular impact of an experience on any given person “depends upon the characteristics of the person who encounters it” (p. 292). Differentiation into a more complex being occurs in a person in various ways, including,

When one comes to see the interacting parts of something formerly seen as unitary, when one distinguishes among concepts formerly seen as similar, when actions are more finely responsive to purposes or to outside conditions, when interests become more varied, tastes more diverse, reactions more subtle (Chickering, 1969, p. 292).

With differentiation, results integration, when one makes associations between aspects of different disciplines. Education occurs when the student experiences increased levels of differentiation and integration. As Chickering (1969) states, “So differentiation and integration are what education is about, and such education makes persons different—different from what they were before and different from each other” (p. 292).

Stanford (1962), in turn, argues that the personality develops through “complexity and wholeness” (p. 257). That is, the personality is expressed in degrees of differentiation, which over time become assimilated into “large wholes.” In other words, the whole personality is formed when “communication among parts is great enough so that the different parts may, without losing their essential identity, become organized into a larger whole” (Stanford, 1962, p. 257). This process must include a certain degree of disruption and disequilibrium as the student, for example, grows intellectually only if he or she faces a new challenge that requires a reaction or response different than one has previously used. As a result, the student is cast into a state of disequilibrium, and in order to restore balance the student must then find a new and different

response to the problem. Heath (1968) described the state of disruption and disequilibrium as being in a potential state of disorganization. He argued that learning occurs when the student opens up to different points of views and theories, when the student entertains different values, beliefs and prejudices, and when the student also allows him or herself to explore ideas in a fantasy mode, where the familiar and unfamiliar can merge into a new reality. By embracing disequilibrium, the student can adapt him or herself to higher-order thinking skills (Heath, 1968). Such cognitive theories clearly have relevance in advising and assert a posture of challenger for the advisor, who is placed in the role of the instigator of creative disequilibrium in the student's mind. Finally, different students will have different levels of tolerance for disequilibrium, and in this too the advisor must act as the challenger.

Psychosocial Theory

Psychosocial theories can serve advising models by applying to them descriptions of the stages of normal development. For example, Erickson (1959) developed a model that included eight stages of development. Of those stages, stage five—identity versus identity diffusion—and stage six—intimacy and distantiation versus self-absorption—seem particularly apt in describing student experiences. These stages encompass student struggles to define themselves through their peer groups and “through partners in friendship, sex, competition and cooperation” (Erikson, 1959, p. 166).

Another example of a psychosocial model that could aid advisement of students, combining cognitive elements as well, is Chickering's (1969) model of the seven vectors of development. According to Chickering, the self develops along seven vectors, including developing competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, clarifying purposes, and developing integrity. This model of vectors clearly would support the development of the whole student, both personal and

academic. By understanding the nature of these vectors, advisors would be able to provide better advice to accommodate specific student needs.

By outlining the basic characteristics of different models of advising, and the cognitive and psychosocial theories underpinning them, this section emphasizes that advising has become a broad concern of the educational community. Moreover, advising itself has expanded from merely academic advising to holistic advising which takes into consideration the whole person of the student. An optimum program of advising would ideally include elements of all of the above models reviewed.

Definition of Terms

- **At-risk student:** Any student who comes to college with personal or academic factors found in studies to place them at-risk of not graduating from college. Previous school record, instances of dropping out, participation in school activities, family background and characteristics (educational level of parents, if any parent attended college), ethnicity and race, socioeconomic status and other factors all contribute to the profile of an at-risk student.
- **Developmental advising:** A kind of advising typically identified by five elements, including exploration of life's goals, exploration of vocational goals, program choice, course choice and scheduling courses.
- **Interactionalist retention theory:** Interactionalist retention theory, as developed by Tinto (1975), takes into account how various aspects of the student's profile and life impact the likelihood of his or her retention in college. These factors include the student's entry characteristics, the success or not of the student's academic and social integration into the life of the university, and, as a result, the level of commitment and persistence in desire to graduate develops in the student.

- Intrusive advising: Advising initiated as an intervention by the advisor, to offer advice to students in special circumstances, or when at extreme risk of dropping-out. This method is more commonly used today to increase retention rates for at-risk populations of students.
- Prescriptive advising: A one-directional method of advising designed to answer specific questions that students may have on such topics as courses, majors, or institutional procedures for dropping courses.
- Retention: The rate or percentage of students who graduate from college, completing their post-secondary education.
- Student Support Services: Developed as part of the federal TRIO programs SSS offers financial, career, personal and academic advising to students who qualify for it, by being at-risk, from low-income status, or by being the first generation of one's family to attend college.

Research Questions

This qualitative study is designed to gain an understanding of the methods TRIO Student Support Services advisors use in their advising sessions with at-risks students and their and their advisees' perceptions of the adequacy of those behaviors in advising sessions. Since the proposed study is designed to illuminate the perceptions of advisors and students independent of one another, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. To what extent and in what ways do Student Support Services advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students?
2. What are Student Support Services advisors' perceptions of how they advise Student Support Services students?

3. What are Student Support Services students' perceptions of how they are advised by Student Support Services advisors?
4. What are the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type?
5. How does perception of advising type affect students' satisfaction?

Methodology

This study makes use of a mixed method research design (see Chapter Three) employing observations as well as the use of a survey instrument in order to determine the perceptions of advisors and students about their participation in advising services of the Student Support Services program. In order to take into account how advisors and students interact during advising sessions, I observed advisors and students during a number of such sessions. I then related the behaviors of students and advisors to the normative behaviors indicated in a noted advising instrument, the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). At the conclusion of the advising sessions, the AAI was distributed to students and advisors to gain their perceptions of the advising sessions, focusing on how the students felt they were being advised and how advisors felt they advised. Another focus was on student satisfaction. The developmental and prescriptive advising items from Part I of the AAI were ranked and compared to the ranked satisfaction items.

Population and Sample

This study reviews the opinions of two populations, advisors and students. The advisors currently participate in SSS advising, and typically have backgrounds in either social science or education, with a Master's degree, as required by federal law, commonly in student services, counseling, social work, student personnel, or education. The students are current participants in TRIO SSS programs. Students participating in the TRIO SSS program must qualify by having

one of the following characteristics: first-generation college student, low-income, and/or student with a disability.

The sample of advisors consisted of five Student Support Services advisors at three public universities in the state of Louisiana. The student sample consisted of a limited number of students participating in TRIO SSS programs at those universities. I observed five advising sessions per advisor, totaling 25 different observations of 25 different students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection began with observing the specified advising sessions. During the advising sessions, I took notes but also made use of a checklist to record behavior. The checklist was developed by operationalizing behaviors associated with developmental and prescriptive advising behaviors in the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI).

After the sessions, I distributed the AAI to student participants. Results of the students completing the AAI aided in revealing student perceptions of advising behaviors and trends that they encounter in advising sessions. The AAI survey allowed me to gather information from SSS student participants regarding their actual experience in the SSS advising sessions and their perceptions of the kinds of behavior that are generally present or absent during the delivery of these services.

After observing the fifth advising session for each advisor, I distributed the AAI to each advisor. The results from the advisors filling out the AAI helped reveal advisor perceptions of the kinds of behavior or trends that occurred in the session. The AAI was distributed to advisors after the completion of all advising sessions in order to prevent their familiarity with the instrument causing them to anticipate results by changing their behavior in the advising sessions.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study derive from the fact that it is focused solely on the TRIO Student Support Services' advising and the population and sample are advisors and students who participate in the SSS program. The literature indicates that the advising of at-risk students may be quite different from the advising of achieving students in the mainstream of a college student body. Moreover, at-risk students may respond to their advising in a different manner than students who are not part of the at-risk population. As a result, this study is focused on improving Student Support Services and is not generalizable to the advising community at large, either advisors or students.

Summary

This dissertation proposal is organized into three chapters. Chapter One introduces the statement of the problem, as well as the purpose and significance of the study. A survey of relevant background material related to the history of TRIO/SSS, the applicability of interactionist retention theory, and various other advising models including developmental, prescriptive and intrusive advising are also included. The research questions that guide this study are also included in Chapter One.

Chapter Two presents a Literature Review of the current advising literature and the empirical evidence on retention and advising models that is relevant and significant to the research questions.

Chapter Three presents the Methodology. This chapter includes information regarding the mixed method research design procedure used in the study in order to answer the research questions. Population, sampling and data analysis techniques are discussed. Issues relevant to data analysis, such as triangulation and trustworthiness are also discussed.

Review of Literature

TRIO programs, including Student Support Services, have been extensively studied in the literature, as have generic programs derived from TRIO, or additional programs currently competing with TRIO for funding. This literature review will briefly survey the number of TRIO programs currently in use, as well as program expansion of preexisting programs in recent years. The Student Support Services program will be placed in the context of a continuum of TRIO programs designed to help students at every step of the way from beginning to think about college, to completing post-secondary education. The special problems, populations, and programs which have been developed to assist at-risk students complete college will be reviewed. The theoretical grounding of Student Support Services in the literature on developmental and intrusive advising is also examined. Finally, the current status of the Student Support Services programs, including new challenges and initiatives, is reviewed.

Introduction

Student Support Services (SSS), one of a group of federally-funded TRIO program designed to assist low-income and first-generation college students navigate the difficult transitions of college life, has had a lasting impact on the retention in college of at-risk students. SSS programs have received considerable support both in real outcomes and by the validation of the advising models SSS makes use of in the literature (Burd, 1999; Devaries, 2002; Frost, 1993; Laff, 1994; Thayer, 2000). Student Support Services, along with other TRIO programs, emerged in the 1960s in response to a gap that emerged between the intentions and outcomes of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Schultz, Colton, & Colton, 2001). By providing federal funding to students who previously did not have access to post-secondary education, especially low-income and African-American students, the Higher Education Act signified a new era in higher education in America, but additional programs were deemed necessary in order to fine-tune the

opportunities which the Act created. The first TRIO program, Upward Bound emerged as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, while Talent Search was added in 1965, at the passage of the Higher Education Act itself (Fields, 2001). Student Support Services was not initiated until the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1968, and it was at this point that the three programs were grouped together, funded under Title IV, and “earned the moniker TRIO” (Fields, p. 29). Several other programs have been added to TRIO since then, including Upward Bound Math Science, The Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and the Educational Opportunity Centers program (Fields, 2001).

Each program in TRIO assists students in different stages of the transition from high school to college and the progression through college to graduation. While the Talent Search program starts early to inform students about their educational options and opportunities, Upward Bound actively prepare students for higher education “With instruction in literature, composition, and math and science on college campuses” (Fields, 2001, p. 31). The special emphasis and focus of the Student Support Services component of the TRIO continuum is helping low-income or first-generation students stay in college until they have received a bachelor degree. Student Support Services accomplishes this task by “tutoring, mentoring and remedial instruction” (Fields, p. 1). Reauthorized in 1993, SSS is specifically targeted to students in one of three different groups: low-income, first generation, and disabled students. In recent years, SSS has clarified its focus, zeroing in on the retention and graduation of all eligible students. In addition, SSS is currently mandated to increase the transfer rates of eligible students from two- to four-year institutions and assist colleges in fostering an institutional climate supportive of the success of transferred students. Student Support Services currently serves students on 796 campuses nationwide (Fields, 2001).

TRIO and the Phases of College Retention

Student Support Services, as mentioned, now exists in the context of a continuum of TRIO programs, each one targeting a different phase in the difficult navigation from high school through college. In order to obtain a better understanding of exactly what Student Support Services does for its students it is necessary to briefly discuss related TRIO programs that concentrate on the different phases of retention and include a review of SSS to move into those phases as well.

Transition to College and SSS

Bridge Programs

In recent years, funding debates over different programs have caused various TRIO programs to adjust their offerings, often impacting the structure and offerings of the Student Support Services programs themselves. For example, the TRIO Talent Search program has recently been forced by competing educational programs to expand its offerings. Historically, Talent Search concentrated on high school students, primarily “alerting them to the availability of federal and state financial aid” (Burd, 1999, p. A45) for college. The program has included many offerings that would fall under the rubric of a bridge program, as it tutored and prepared students for college entrance exams, took students on tours of college campuses, and helped students find scholarships to pay for college (Burd, 1999). In the early 1990s, however, Talent Search organizers began to realize that their students were “coming to high school without basic skills” (Burd, 1999, p. A44). Thus, they began to expand their program to help students in earlier, middle school grades. However, as “Lawmakers never provided the Talent Search program with a great influx of money to achieve this aim” (Burd, 1999, A45), Talent Search’s offerings in the sixth grade were limited.

The expansion of Talent Search into middle school is important, however, both because other TRIO programs followed suit and have “worked with middle school students for years” (Fields, 2001, p. 27), but also because a new non-TRIO program – Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) – was signed into public law in 1998 to target middle school students and has raised complaints by TRIO supporters that GEAR UP involves a wasteful duplication of services (Fields, 2001). Fundors of GEAR UP claim that “the initiative added what they considered a critical missing piece to the federal government’s array of efforts to extend college opportunity to low income students, the middle school piece” (Fields, p. 26). TRIO supporters argue that Talent Search and other TRIO programs had indeed already extended the bridge to college into the earlier grades.

The tremendous response of the educational community to GEAR UP, with nearly 20 percent of the nation’s college and universities participating, reinforces a growing educational belief that the bridge to successful transition to college must be built earlier and earlier (Fields, 2001). As such, GEAR UP’s success reaffirms TRIO’s success, as it has “joined TRIO as a major player in the federal government’s multimillion dollar arsenal of programs aimed at closing the gap between the haves and the have-nots in education” (Fields, 2001, p. 26). Nonetheless, TRIO supporters argue that the federal government should simply fund more TRIO programs, rather than duplicate their services in the creation of another program (Burd, 1999). Further, the recent debate between GEAR UP and TRIO, while providing evidence of the success of such programs, indicates that there remains some “uncertainty about how the government can help low income students prepare for college” (Burd, p. A44). The debate also presents a picture of unanimity amongst educators that the bridge to college is more important than ever—an idea first proposed by the TRIO Talent Search program.

TRIO's Upward Bound program, targeting students at the undergraduate and high school levels, has also been involved in the creation of bridges to ease the transition to college. This program too has begun to expand to middle school, even though most still focus on high school students and undergraduates (Fields, 2001). Upward Bound includes many instructional courses designed to assist students in developing critical thinking skills and other coping skills. Particular programs can be lengthened or shortened and tailored to the needs of a particular student body (Maxie, 2003). The goal of Upward Bound counseling is "to emphasize the positive attributes in each student and make sure their input is recognized" (Maxie, p. 2). An Upward Bound program at Rust College, reviewed in a recent study, was shown to have strong effects on children (Devarics, 2002, p. 8). While, only two thirds of all students graduated from high school and went on to college, in the particular college under study, all students enrolled in Upward Bound graduated from high school and 86 percent of those went on into a post-secondary program (Devarics, 2002). The growing awareness that "waiting until high school to begin preparing students college is often too late" (Fields, 2001, p. 27) and that the bridge must be expanded into middle school, is rooted in TRIO's documented success.

Also because of the presence of GEAR UP, more and more institutions are offering bridge programs, which have proven to be successful in transitioning at-risk students from their previous environment to the college environment. These programs often involve collaboration between high schools and colleges and often stay with a student until they are firmly established in a major in college (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini, 1995). The most successful programs "have provided systematic and comprehensive academic support services" (Terenzini, p. 13). Services offered include assessment, remediation, learning laboratories, tutorial services, intrusive advising and monitoring of student progress (Terenzini, 1995). Many of these programs, and numerous newer programs, duplicate programs offered by the Student Support

Services of TRIO, but their proliferation confirms the conclusion of the literature's belief that such programs must be put in place to ensure student success in college.

More and more educators understand that attrition rates in college are high because the transition between high school and college is so difficult (Carriulo, Rodgers & Stout, 2001). Researchers call for more colleges to partner with the K-12 educational world, in order to smooth the transition to college—and TRIO has been involved in this drive. It is now recommended that student support personnel begin to discuss college with students earlier and earlier. Moreover, it is believed that advisors must continually reinforce the link between classroom learning and the out-of-class lives of students in order to ease the transition. Indeed, if advisors draw connections between the lives students live outside of class and classroom teaching, all such links are “avenues for increasing the chances of a successful transition [to college]” (Watson, 1993, p. 57). So important has the issue of transition-smoothing become that some educators call for more programs that assist the transition from high school to college.

Some summer bridge programs offered by SSS have been instituted specifically with the at-risk student in mind. In the context of the development of such programs, all such programs show new thinking about the special needs of at-risk students as well as sensitivity to the fact that these students need more attention. The latter fact is attested to by the presence of full-time specialists in advising capacity in many of these bridge programs (Gordon, 1994).

Orientation Programs

In order to respond to the problems students have in making the transition to college (once they have arrived at college), universities have become more involved in creating orientation programs for students. New institutional policies are “particularly sensitive to the separation and transitional difficulties new students face in attempting to make the jump to college” (Tinto, 1988, p. 451). Colleges are acutely aware that the transition to college is

difficult as, at present, “about one half of all students who drop out of college do so during their freshman year, and many leave during the first six to eight weeks” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 18). Findings that students are greatly helped in surviving if they develop a sense of belonging on campus and that that sense is most often created by encouraging faculty contact, has further motivated colleges to implement strong orientation programs (Heisserer & Parette, 2002).

Traditionally, orientation classes are held at the commencement of classes each year. The goal of such orientation sessions are “typically to acquaint students with the administration regulations and expected behaviors of the institution, introduce them to student organizations and activities, acquaint them with available student services, and help them design an academic program” (Pascarella et al., 1986, p. 156). Studies have shown that orientation programs are indeed successful in the process of socializing the student. In one study, the authors found that “exposure to orientation has the third largest total effect on freshman year persistence” (Pascarella et al., 1986, p. 156). In another study, the authors found that orientation has a substantial impact on socialization, but a lesser impact on the student’s commitment to the institution’s values (Pascarella et al., 1986).

Given the growing attrition rate of at-risk students, other researchers argue that many traditional orientation programs are only partly successful in easing the transition to college (Tinto, 1988). Research has determined that the transition to college is most disruptive and difficult for minority students. There are several reasons for this. For one thing, minority students are often admitted to college “on the basis of an acceptable high school GPA and standardized test scores” (Lopez, Yanez, Clayton, & Thompson, 1982, p. 198). On the basis of such numbers, there is no expectation that the student will have trouble in college, but they do. This is primarily due to the fact that “entrance test scores and high school GPA scores were not highly correlated with college GPAs for high-risk students” (Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, &

Goodwin, 1998, p. 197), indicating either a standards gap between two systems or that problems in college derive from non-cognitive areas such as self-confidence (Chaney et al., 1998).

Because of the special needs of at-risk students, traditional orientation programs “fail to provide the long-term academic and social assistance new students require during the first months of their college careers” (Tinto, 1988, p. 451). Observing that orientation is most effective when it involves advising and mentoring contacts, some institutions have expanded orientation services to cover the entire first year with a structured, intrusive advising regimen. More orientation programs are involving faculty, counselors, and administrators and consist of year-long advising (Watson, 1993). Studies have found that the frequency of contact between the advisor and student improves the outcome of the advising process, with students who met with advisors nine or more times a semester doing better than those who met the traditional two times (Frost, 1990). Frequency of meetings also broadens the topics discussed and changes the very nature of the advising (Frost, 1990). By adjusting orientation to accommodate the needs of at-risk students, many colleges have “transformed orientation into an important vehicle through which effective programming can have a positive impact on student persistence” (Pascarella et al., 1986).

Student Support Services programs have been documented to have originated and participated in bridge or orientation programs designed to ease the transition from high school to college for at-risk students. Pre-college programs offered by TRIO under SSS “have proven to be effective in helping students understand the realities of getting into college and then negotiating the intricacies of college life” (Carriulo et al., 2001, p. 27). Examples of such programs cited in the literature as successful include the SSS bridge program operated at Drexel University, aimed at developing a sense of community among project participants. The program “involves students in structured academic programs in the summer prior to their first fall

semester” and during that summer “forge a bond between the students” so that they enter the Fall semester with confidence (Thayer, 2000, p. 6).

The Bridge Scholars Program of TRIO is a highly structured transition program, which includes weekly feedback, monitoring, and a strong faculty connection. This program builds on the idea of the learning community, by having students live together and enroll in the same course clusters (Thayer, 2000). The Skagit Valley College Student Support Services project also uses the learning community concept to integrate course clusters throughout the students’ college years. In these clusters, a math class, for example, is linked to a study skills class, as well as a math tutorial (Thayer, 2000). Michigan State’s SSS summer bridge program addresses multiple risk factors, also by having students live together, take courses together, and “participate in workshops designed to promote knowledge of and connection to the campus” (Thayer, 2000, p. 7). These students in turn reside together during their first full year in college and meet weekly throughout their first year with the staff of the mentoring program (Thayer, 2000). These examples of TRIO SSS programs embody the validated successes of extended orientation and intrusive advising programs and are firmly based in Tinto’s model of college integration.

Finally, Student Support Services very often expands routine orientation to cover the entire freshman year. The “structured freshman year” program is one of the most common practices of the highest-performing SSS programs (Thayer, 2000). These programs approach students before entering college, prepare them for college, then play a major role in their course selection upon arrival at college. Intrusive advising is continued, in this program, throughout freshman year, and academic services are provided “to buttress the courses in which the participants are enrolled” (Thayer, p. 6).

Some orientation programs are also linked to other offerings by colleges. Findings in one study indicate that so-called blended programs, where the SSS programs are linked to the

programs already provided by the larger support services of the college, are the most successful programs in raising retention rates. While stand-alone projects tend to dominate current practice, certainly the confluence of university orientation and retention efforts and TRIO programs undoubtedly point programming toward blended mixes of various programs tailored to individual needs. In these blended programs, peer tutoring stands out as the most important factor for success, reflecting again the importance of integration as well as academic success in college (Chaney et al., 1998).

Retention in College and SSS

Though access to college has been a major theme of educational reform in the past generation, recent developments in the TRIO programs indicate that the emphasis is changing from access to success. Indeed, “if access was a defining educational opportunity theme for higher education beginning in the mid-1990s, retention has become a defining theme for the 1990s” (Thayer, 2000, p. 3). That is, colleges have come to realize that admission is the least difficult aspect of a college education and that retention, or graduating with a degree from college, is a far greater challenge – a challenge that may be beyond the capabilities of the unassisted at-risk or disadvantaged student.

At present, nearly 40 percent of all students “leave institutions of higher education without receiving their four-year degrees” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 18). Broken down to highlight ethnicity, the attrition rates reveal still worse news. Recent reports indicate that only 19.4 percent of African-Americans students graduate, while only 30.5 percent of Mexican-American students and 22 percent of Native Americans students earned their bachelor degrees after admission to college (Schultz et al., 2001). In terms of income, the disparities in college admission are even worse. Only 3 percent of students at top schools in the U.S. come from families in the bottom of the socioeconomic quartile, while only 10 percent come from families

in the bottom half. That is, 74% of all students in college today “hail from families in the top quartile” (Symonds, 2003, p. 2). Indeed, “students from first-generation and low-income backgrounds are among the least likely to be retained through degree completion” (Thayer, 2000, p. 3).

It is exactly these populations with high attrition rates that TRIO and SSS serve. At present, two-thirds of students covered by TRIO “come from homes where the family income is \$24000 or less” (Fields, 2001, p. 29). Thirty-five per cent of all students participating in TRIO are African Americans, and “most of the students in TRIO are first generation college students” (Fields, p. 29). Serving an overall population of approximately 800,000 students, according to the U.S. Department of Education, TRIO therefore serves a population which, the literature confirms, continues to be in dire need of extra assistance in attending and succeeding in college (Fields, 2001).

Moreover, the presence of more at-risk students on college campuses, due primarily to the new emphasis on preparing and admitting them to college, has been primarily responsible for the fact that graduation rates for U.S. colleges and universities in general “have actually been declining for several years” (Thayer, 2000, p. 3). It is for this reason that retention and persistence in college have become an increasing fascination in the literature over the past 10 years.

Because TRIO has been serving at-risk students for years, its programs have been at the vanguard of retention advising programs. Retention programs seek to create an environment on campus that is conducive to success. Many of these programs target at-risk students in order to improve the “currently deplorable percentages of retention and graduation for disadvantaged students” (McConnell & Terenzini, 1999, in Tinto, 1999). Student support services, as modeled by TRIO SSS, involve counselors and faculty in support programs that try to develop student

confidence in a holistic manner. The primary strategy made use of by TRIO SSS is to implement learning communities, where groups of students live together and take the same classes, in order to “build a sense of community around an academic focus” (Thayer, 2000, p. 6).

SSS programs, as a result, are the cutting edge of numerous efforts to improve students’ chances of graduating from college. Other tactics that the Student Support Services of TRIO include are instructional courses, workshops, opportunities to attend cultural events, professional advising, peer tutoring, and self-esteem classes. Mentoring becomes an element of TRIO programs, as the student progresses through college. Finally, TRIO SSS programs incorporate elements of both developmental and intrusive advising, as prescribed by the literature.

Indeed, one of the most praised aspects of Student Support Services is that the program offers diverse services, provided in many ways. SSS programs differ greatly in their use of various services from institution to institution (Chaney et al., 1998). Some institutions offer only fee driven SSS program services, while others offer a wide range. Sometimes the student body SSS serves is so diverse as to confound studies of outcomes, as fair comparisons between groups are hard to find (Chaney et al., 1998). This is part of the plan, as “SSS is intentionally structured to allow diversity in the institutional programs so that institutions may fit the programs to meet their own particular strengths and needs” (Chaney et al., 1998). Thus, under the SSS umbrella, one may find counseling sessions, tutoring workshops, learning labs, cultural events, special services for handicapped students, and instructional courses, as noted. More leeway in tailoring programs to needs is offered by the possibility of blending SSS programs with preexisting institutional programs. Further, within a single institution, SSS program services may vary from student to student. Thus, given this variation, “while one SSS participant may receive a considerable amount of tutoring, another at the same institution may receive little or none”

(Chaney et al., p. 201). The overall reason given for this wide variety of programming is that Student Support Services are more interested in students graduating, however that may be accomplished, than in offering only a particular type of prescribed program.

That said, the offerings of SSS can be divided into different areas studied in the literature. The broad repertoire of the programs offered by TRIO SSS, along with results of studies about their outcomes, will be reviewed.

Instructional Courses, Workshops, and Cultural Events in SSS

Student Support Services instructional courses and workshops have been found, in the literature, to have had a positive impact on retention. This is especially true when the amount of programming is increased to a certain “critical mass” of regularity and persistence, resulting in a positive impact (Chaney et al., 1998). However, instructional courses offered by SSS did not show statistically significant impact on student grade point averages (Chaney et al., 1998). Nonetheless, others argue that, while an individual course may not turn out to have “a unique academic value” (Chaney et al., 1998, p. 204), it serves the larger programming mandate by having clustered students together in a way that encourages interpersonal bonding and integration on campus.

Another type of instruction offered by Student Support Services entails sessions that deal with self-esteem and confidence issues. In these classes, students often come together to talk about what makes a great person, or write about “someone who was special to them and talk about it in front of the class” (Maxie, 2003, p. 2). Following on the idea of student integration, the rationale behind these sessions is that students with high self-esteem make better students and are better prepared to learn. Other SSS programs, such as those which arrange for students to participate in cultural events, show ambiguous results in the literature, however (Chaney et al., 1998).

Peer Tutoring and Learning Communities in SSS

Within the theoretical discourse regarding the need for students to be integrated in a college community, two aspects of Student Support Services have attracted special attention: peer tutoring and the creation of learning communities. In one study, Devarics (1997) showed peer tutoring had the greatest impact on student success. Devarics also postulated that being involved with peers in cultural events and with the same peers in workshops and other courses enhances one's integration in college life. Moreover, the more involved students are with peers, in tutoring and other services, the more likely they are to graduate (Devarics, 1997).

Communities of learning, which have been incorporated in orientation programs, are also established as a regular part of most SSS programs. The idea that if a student is embedded within a learning community of like-minded students, his or her chances of success are increased is being used to improve student integration on campus. In such a community, a student is assigned to a housing situation with a chosen group of other students. That same group of students then takes a series of related or linked courses together, as a learning community. The advantages of this system are that the student has built-in academic support. Study skills are explored in the context of the linked curriculum, and "students develop a sense of community and a network of support through their classes" (Thayer, 2000, p. 6). Overall, "learning community mechanisms help students focus on school, and working in a learning community keeps teaching fresh" (Thayer, 2000, p. 6). Tinto (1999) has confirmed that shared learning or supportive peer groups are one of the best mechanisms for ensuring retention. As a result, the literature at present is encouraging SSS to form more learning communities, as "learning communities should be among the primary strategies utilized by SSS programs serving students from first-generation backgrounds" (Thayer, 2000, p. 6).

Professional Advising in SSS

In addition to stand-alone programs, or peer-related programs, Student Support Services also entails a number of advisory programs in which advisors and faculty become involved in helping at-risk students navigate the challenges of college life. These programs lie at the heart of SSS efforts to create a supportive and encouraging environment for at-risk students.

Developmental Advising and SSS

The overall literature now favors developmental over traditional prescriptive advising, the latter appearing to many researchers to facilitate a process of integration that involves the whole—academic and social—student. Most SSS programs have been moving toward a model of developmental advising.

Advising in SSS has been determined by the literature to be highly influential in integrating students into college life, as prescribed for success by Tinto's model (Pascarella et al., 1986, p. 155). Padilla and Pavel (1994) state that, "The measurement of academic integration as required by Tinto's (1975) model of college departure could be strengthened by including academic advising as a constituent of academic integration" (p. 155). In addition to supporting advising, "there is mounting evidence [in the literature] that a comprehensive approach to the advising process is essential to the successful completion of academic goals" (Trombley, 1984, p. 234). Research has repeatedly suggested that contact with faculty outside of the classroom is a strong factor in improving a student's chances for graduation. Advising "provides a natural context within which to strengthen a student's link to the campus" (Trombley, 1984, p. 234). Overall, therefore, the literature acknowledges that "advising has measurable impact upon students" (Beatty, 1991, p. 8). The literature also states that advising must be recognized by institutions as important, have well articulated goals, and that new

advising methods are always needed to further improve the advisement-integration process (Beatty, 1991).

Which type of advising is preferable to the theoretical-validated process of integration is no longer an issue. Developmental advising, as opposed to traditional prescriptive advising has been favored in the literature (Ender, Winston & Miller, 1984; Gardner, 1986; Gordon, 1988; Fielstein, 1987, 1989, 1992; Frost, 1990b, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978; Sagaria, Higginson, & White, 1980; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980; Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites, & Associates, 1984; Winston & Sandor, 1984). Crookston (1972) identified different kinds of advising a generation ago, with the differences still under discussion. Crookston “identified prescriptive or traditional advising in which students receive answers to specific questions and are closely supervised by advisors” and contrasted the traditional form of advising to what was termed developmental advising “a relationship based on shared responsibility, in which students participate in the academic planning process” (Frost, 1993, p. 15). Crookston reinforced this distinction by envisioning colleges as “intellectual learning centers” with contact between student and teacher both inside and outside the classroom being important for personal student growth (Frost, 1993). As developmental ideas focus on the “student’s potential to become self-directed,” prescriptive advising is a “limiting, supervisory relationship in which advisors take the initiative to see that students fulfill curricular requirements” (Frost, 1993, p. 15). In developmental advising “a bond is formed between the student and the advisor in a working and learning relationship” (Saving & Keim, 1998, p. 511).

While developmental advising is overwhelmingly espoused in the literature, as well as in the rhetoric of student personnel, graduate programs, and public policy arenas, some researchers have found that “the concept is not widely implemented on college or university campuses” (Frost, 1993, p. 15). A gap has developed between theory and practice, literature and institution.

While “most authors agree with the philosophy of developmental advising, most institutions do not embrace this philosophy” (Saving & Keim, 1998, p. 511). Various explanations have been proposed to explain this gap: lack of commitment or time by faculty, lack of training, lack of understanding of the developmental concept, and lack of evaluation of existing advising programs (Saving & Keim, 1998). A number of studies of the advising field find little overall improvement in the quality of advising and the continuation of practices which could be described as prescriptive (Laff, 1994). Indeed, “little or no improvements have been seen in assisting students in considering life goals, understanding the purpose of higher education, development of self-understanding and self-acceptance, and mastering decision-making skills” (Laff, p. 47). More important to some is that “Crookston never discussed how the relationship between developmental theory and advising was to be made” (Laff, p. 46). That is, “he never outlined the teaching activity that he claimed was associated with a developmental view of advising” (Laff, p. 46). This has left researchers struggling to find effective ways of advising, aware that “there is no single formula for academic advising” (Winston & Sandor, 1984, p. 5).

The search for effective advising is urgent, as “student dissatisfaction with current advising practices” (Herndon et al., 1996, p. 638) is a recurrent theme in the literature. 52 percent of students in one survey by the American Council on Education were not satisfied with academic advising at their colleges (Frost, 1990). Results from studies of student preferences find that students like advisors who discuss broader educational issues, degree requirements, and review career opportunities “rather than those who just signed the registration forms” (Herndon et al., p. 638). The fact that one study showed that advisors think they are advising developmentally, when students did not agree, adds still more pressure to the search for the advising formula (Saving & Keim, 1998). “Administrators should be somewhat alarmed” by students where faculty score themselves high on advising, while students grade them low

(Saving & Keim, p. 516). This gap of perception further feeds itself, as disappointed students in turn are reluctant to take advantage of various aspects of instructor feedback that might improve advising (Abrams & Jernigan, 1984). If students do not attempt to meet with and therefore make a connection with faculty, then how can a relationship, or for that matter, developmental advising exist?

Some of the problems with the faculty-based advising system are studied in the literature. The fact that many advisors do not like to advise and many counselors do not want to participate in academic advising, creates motivation problems (O'Banion, 1972, p. 67). Counselors often seek to make students feel comfortable and encourage and support students, often initiating personal topics, but do not discuss course scheduling or academics (Daller, Creamer and Creamer (1997). Because of this division of labor, faculty perceive academic advising as strictly a matter of scheduling. Faculty members often "do not have the background or expertise to handle the type of personal relationship that developmental advising requires" (Gordon, 1994, p. 72). Oftentimes, they "do not come from disciplines where human developmental theory and the teaching of communication skills are taught" (Gordon, 1994, p. 72). Large caseloads and lack of consistency in advisor contacts have also been discerned as weaknesses in the literature (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Continuing in authoritative prescriptive relationships, such advisors simply diagnose a problem and prescribe a remedy (Winston & Sandor, 1984). As a result of their focus, students "perceive that advising involves only scheduling and registration, equating advising with high school guidance" (Gordon, 1994, p. 72). "The advisor's ability to give accurate and correct academic guidance is often the most commonly stated expectation of students receiving advising services" (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 17). While the literature does not support such prescriptive advising, it remains that in a survey "over 54 percent of students rated such prescriptive activities as high priority, including explaining graduation

requirements, discussing course selection, planning a course of study...and exploring career options” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002 p. 16).

Developmental advising remains the favored mode of delivery of advising in the literature, supporting the programs and services offered in TRIO Student Support Services. Preferred by most students (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Herndon et al., 1996; Winston & Sandor, 1984), the developmental approach is hailed by many “as an effective method of improving student persistence” (Daller et al., 1997, p. 31). Developmental advising is distinguished from prescriptive advising by its focus on individual student concerns and aspirations (Gordon, 1994). Developmental advising “views the student as a self-directed learner and strives to transfer responsibility for academic planning to the student while helping the student develop decision-making and problem-solving skills” (Frost, 1990, p. 9). Specifically, the developmental advisor engages students in “developmental tasks,” that is, looks for potential within a student, then helps the student strive to achieve that potential (Laff, 1994). Thus, routine practices like answering everyday questions are transformed into developmental projects focused on goals (Creamer & Creamer, 1994). A typical approach taken by a developmental advisor is to “involve students in their individual college experiences” by not providing answers to questions but “guiding students to campus resources to gather the information they need to make decisions about courses, majors and careers” (Frost, 1990, p. 19). Students are encouraged to even question departmental chairs, in one case, before committing to a major (Frost, 1993). Indeed, in one study of developmental advising practices, it was found that advisors rarely made decisions for students, “preferring instead to engage students in the decision-making process and to encourage them to take responsibility for their educational futures” (Frost, 1993, p. 19).

Being involved in developmental advising necessitates that the advisors “learn to play some unaccustomed roles, among them counselor, advocate and guardian” (Walsh, 1979, p.

448). In a study of advising in small liberal arts colleges, most advisors did perform what students perceived as developmental tasks in their advising (Frost, 1993). It was shown that, contrary to reports that faculty members do not wish to advise, this study found that faculty advisors wished to get to know students personally and that they “display[ed] an interest in students’ total college experiences” (Frost, 1993, p. 19). The important functions which students expected from advisors were fulfilled, including assisting with class selection and “forming a relationship of sufficient closeness that the student is known beyond her file” (Winston & Sandor, 1984, p. 12). The two programs reviewed in one study did receive “developmental ratings from students” (Frost, 1993, p. 16). Findings of positive programs suggest that advising programs must be expanded to include more “planned incidences of advisor contact” (Frost, 1990, p. 13) and that supplementary activities designed to “teach problem-solving and decision-making skills and to provide practice in the planning process should be incorporated” (Frost, 1990, p. 13).

The final support for developmental advising provided by the literature comes from studies which indicate that students greatly prefer developmental over prescriptive advising (Herndon et al., 1996). Female students also expressed a “significantly higher preference for developmental advising” than male students (Herndon et al., 1996, p. 646). While expressing a desire not to “go back to the days of *in loco parentis*” (Winston & Sandor, 1984, p. 12), students nonetheless desire interest and support from their advisors, and students wish advisors to allow them “maximum freedom of behavior and decision making” (Winston & Sandor, p. 12). The one-to-one relationship that is established in a developmental advising situation has been shown to improve student outcomes, as well as have a “profound effect on the student’s academic career” as a whole (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 17). Success with at-risk students has

particularly found to be dependent on the advisor moving beyond the prescriptive to the developmental advising relationship (Heisserer & Parette, 2002).

Intrusive Advising and SSS

An overriding theme of TRIO SSS studies and related advising programs is that the old system of a student and teacher meeting twice a year is no longer adequate for most students and is clearly inadequate for at-risk students. In creating a supportive environment for minorities especially, regularity and frequency of contacts between advisor and student is necessary to make an impact on the student. Moreover, such regular contact between faculty and student helps create an environment in which the student feels welcome and comfortable (Chaney et al., 1998). Examples of non-SSS programs which have adopted the notion of regularity and frequency is the Adventor Program, as documented in the literature, which “shows strong promise in retaining students of color” by means of combining frequent advising and mentoring in a proactive model (Schultz et al., 2001, p. 215). The College Migrant Program in California, targeting Mexican Americans, also uses regular advising to improve college retention rates (Lopez et al., 1982).

Student Support Services, especially advising or mentoring, which includes frequent meetings or contacts carried out throughout a first year, or an entire academic career, involve what the literature terms “intrusive advising” (Lopez et al., 1982). Intrusive advising is defined as proactive interventions by advisors to solve specific or ongoing student problems. The use of intrusive advising has been supported in the literature for students who exhibit classroom behavior problems, for transfer students, for minority students, and for students on probation or other disadvantaged students (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The importance of intrusive advising “has been repeatedly emphasized in the professional literature” (Heisserer & Parette, p. 15). Overall, intrusive advising has been found to be “effective in increasing the retention and overall

academic performance of a variety of high risk special student populations” (Lopez et al., 1982, p. 199). While these outcomes may be positive for a variety of reasons, the fact that the students in an intrusive advising program know that they will be checked up on is an important factor in its success (Lopez et al., 1982).

In one study, an advising program using intrusive advising was established at a particular college because its Office of Minority Affairs noted the alarming statistic that “the attrition rate for minority students at the University....consistently averaged about 50% per year” (Lopez et al., 1982, p. 198). The program implemented was “based on the philosophy that the university should call students in for advising numerous times during the year”—the essence of intrusive advising (Glennen & Baxley, 1983, p. 12). This method of delivering advising was a marked change from the traditional custom of having student and advisor meet once a semester. Nor was the advising merely about meeting more often, intrusive advising also entails direct interventions into the student’s decision-making processes, involves efforts to increase the student’s motivation for social interaction, and involves other efforts to “ensure the probability of the student’s academic success” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 19).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that intrusive advising has a direct impact on the number of credit hours a student completes each semester, study skills, time management strategies, and classroom attendance (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The fact that the advisor has made a commitment to contact the student several times per semester also has been found to keep students committed to achieving their goals (Lopez et al., 1982). The results of an implementation of an intrusive advising program at one college resulted in reduction of attrition from 66 percent to 48 percent during freshman year (Glennen & Baxley, 1983). At another college where an intrusive advising program was implemented for minority students, the retention rate for those students “increased dramatically” (Lopez et al., p. 199). Indeed, while

the overall retention rate at this college was 67 percent, among minority students, after implementation of the program, it was 80 percent (Lopez et al., 1982). Overall, “intrusive advising made a significant difference in the academic performance of these students” (Lopez et al., p. 199).

The arrival of intrusive advising in SSS and other advising programs is a welcome antidote to the traditional advising system. Reports indicate that that system was not properly serving at-risk students. Minority students have consistently reported dissatisfaction with the advising programs on campus and report of advisors who “made no attempt to familiarize themselves with the academic backgrounds of students” (Lopez et al., 1982, p. 198). This failure of the traditional advisor is especially critical to at-risk and minority students, who are feeling disoriented on campus. The literature states that advisors need to know their students.

For this reason, the paradigm of developmental advising, functionalized within the scheduling of intrusive advising, has come to frame many of the programs or procedures offered by SSS advisors. In developmental advising, the advisor must come to know the student and treat and advise him or her in a holistic manner. Today, advisors must be able to communicate effectively with eye contact and allow students to fully explain their ideas. Advisors must also be “sensitive to body language...and acknowledge what the student is saying through verbal and nonverbal feedback” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 17). Studies of at-risk students in particular make the issue of communication more complicated, as there are numerous barriers to effective communication.

Mentoring and SSS

Student Support Services advising can often evolve into mentoring, where the advisor is a member of the faculty in the student’s area of study. Heisserer & Parette (2002) report that a significant reason why students decide to stay in college is that they have made contact with at

least one significant person within the institution. Recurrent contact with a mentor is deemed to be even better in improving a student's commitment to the college. When faculty is involved in student advising, not only do the faculty become more aware of and sensitive to the problems faced by, for example, freshmen students, but they can impart their knowledge on campus policies and procedures to the student and may even help the student find a job (McConnell, 2000). The mentor also serves as a role model for a student and, as a result, many students have reported that their relationship with their mentor is "very important" to them (Freeman, 1999, p. 18).

The literature has much to say on the qualities of a good mentor, within or without an SSS program. Not only must students come to trust a mentor, but they state that "a good mentor would be someone who encouraged them in their desires and needs" (Freeman, 1999, p. 19). A good mentor, moreover, must challenge a student and must make him or her think about the choices he or she is making. But mentors must also be "matched with persons with whom they can communicate freely and with faculty and staff who have similar interests" (Freeman, 1999, p. 16). One practical benefit of a good mentoring relationship is that it can act as an early warning system if the student has wandered into academic trouble, and the mentor can alert others to potential academic difficulties of the student (Shultz et al., 2001). As in all other advising interventions, studies find that mentoring "works best when problems are intercepted early and there is enough time for intervention to make a difference" (Shultz et al., p. 213).

Mentors have been found to be particularly important for at-risk students as served by TRIO. Freeman (1999) studied a program with mentoring and included reports that it made the transition and adjustment to higher education much easier for a group of at-risk students. Further, mentors have been shown to be particularly helpful to African-American students (Freeman, 1999).

Student Populations Served by SSS

As has been stated throughout this dissertation, Student Support Services of TRIO are mandated to serve at-risk, first generation, or disabled students. What distinguishes contemporary formulations of SSS programs from older programs is the fact that the population served by TRIO is being differentiated in various ways, or changing in such a way as to complicate once simpler notions of what or who an at-risk student might be. This is due not only to more studies of the at-risk student and his or her particular characteristics, but to changing demographic outlines of the student population in the American post-secondary educational system.

The literature at present cross-sections the population of at-risk students in two broad ways. The more traditional way of describing the particularities of at-risk students is to divide them up according to income-level, ethnicity and gender. Even where this continues to be done, new complications arise. For example, while most TRIO participants since 1953 have been African-American, changes in the demographic profile of the population of students in the United States has been undergoing a change. As a result, the 2000 Census found that the Hispanic population rose 58 percent in ten years, while the African-American population rose only 16 percent, making the Hispanic population the largest minority in the country today (Twohey, 2001). This reality has caused some friction in both ethnic communities, as they grapple with the policy outcomes of a changing social and political landscape. Funding issues regarding TRIO and SSS have and will continue to be affected by these issues (Twohey, 2001). That many more Latino Americans now seek coverage by TRIO programs will reframe the issue of ethnicity in terms of this recent demographic change. Moreover, the large number of foreign students in American universities, further complicates a picture of at-risk students drawn from ethnicity alone. It is possible, therefore, that as ethnicity as a concept becomes more

complicated, programs may have to shift to other criteria upon which to offer their services.

While, in the past, ethnicity was somewhat of a standard for defining at-risk students, because of the changing demographics the definition of at-risk students must follow much broader guidelines.

It is most likely for this reason that more and more studies are focusing on different populations of at-risk students based solely on where they stand in the process of moving through the educational system from middle school to college graduation. It is for the latter reason that this review has cross-sectioned the population of at-risk students according to whether they are thinking about going to college, are entering college, having arrived at college and are floundering, or have moved to more advanced stages of TRIO program support. These TRIO programs respectively range from Talent Search, Upward Bound, SSS and McNair programs.

An example of the kind of particularity now infusing TRIO SSS program decisions is the emergence of certain subgroups within ethnic communities, which the programs must deal with in different ways. For example, because TRIO has supported many African-American students in high school, they are graduating from high school with honors and at the top of their class (Freeman, 1999). According to conventional admission board thinking, then, these honors students require no orientation or retention programming once they attend college. At the same time, these students remain underrepresented in gifted programs which might bring other programming benefits en route to college simply because the traditional measures of giftedness in the United States weigh against African Americans. As a result, this subgroup of high-achieving African-Americans falls between the cracks, comes to college without programming support and then fails to complete college (Plummer, 1995). Recognizing the emergence of such

a problem of African-American students on their way to and through college, it is reasonable to suggest that TRIO SSS programming would address this particular population.

An added difficulty of advising at-risk populations is that each subgroup expresses a preference for a particular kind of advising. Advising therefore must take care to tailor its offerings to the particular subgroup being advised, while remaining focused on individual needs. The literature states that SSS advising should continue to move away from traditional or prescriptive advising to developmental and intrusive advising, as different subgroups express preferences along this continuum. For example, as a subgroup of at-risk students, women “express a significantly higher preference for developmental advising than do men” (Daller et al., 1997, p. 31). African-American students have also expressed a preference for advising which encompasses the whole student. Moreover, “students of color prefer working with advisors who share their ethnicity” (Daller, et. al, 1997, p. 31), and studies have found that cultural differences between advisor and advisee can indeed “undermine communication between advisors and students who belong to different ethnic groups” (Daller, et. al, p. 31).

Differences in self-perception virtually create different subgroups and sticky problems for advisors. For example, there is the subgroup of students who believe that “all is going well and who seem genuinely surprised to learn that all has not gone well” (Austin, Cherney, Crowner, & Hill, 1997, p. 45). Such perplexing situations are often the result of advising sessions based solely on grades, particularly in the case of probationary students, another subgroup of advisees who need special attention and care (Austin et al., 1997).

Because first-generation students represent a combination of various ethnicities and a posture marking them as at-risk—that they are the first in their families to enroll in college—this population of students has received a significant amount of attention and may be taken as exemplary of the population served by SSS.

First-Generation College Students and SSS

Another way of measuring the at-risk nature of a student, is his her position within a family tradition of college attendance. The population of first-generation college students is a new, and growing group, given the changed nature of an American educational system focused on access for all. In 1995, students who were the first in their families to ever attend college made up 45 percent of the total population of undergraduates in the United States. As most first-generation students start their career in communities colleges (as, in 1994, 55% of all first-generation college students attended community colleges), programs to help them stay in college first developed there (McConnell, 2000). Studies have found that first-generation college students have special needs, and those needs “differ in many ways from second-generation students” (McConnell, 2000, p. 79). These students differ not only in terms of their academic and social integration into college life, but “in their academic performance and persistence rates as well” (McConnell, 2000, p. 79). Though some argue that the literature to date on the particular problems facing first-generation students is “limited” (Terenzini, 1995), new studies focusing on the pre-college expectations, first-year attrition rates, and continued needs through college have emerged.

McConnell (2000) reports that the differences between first- and second-generation college students begin to emerge in high school. He states that while high school experiences, academic ability, and self-confidence in math and other subjects were roughly the same, attitude reveals a marked difference. First-generation students were “more likely to say they doubted they were academically prepared for college” (McConnell, 2000, p. 78). They also believed that they would get lower grades in college than second-generation students and overall “had lower perceptions of their academic abilities” (McConnell, 2000, p. 78). First-generation students were also found to have had more limited knowledge of post-secondary admission and financial aid

processes “and were less likely to complete the steps to enroll in a four-year institution than their second generation peers” (McConnell, 2000, p. 77). Also, first-generation students are not entirely sure if “college is the road to success” (McConnell, 2000, p. 76) and rate career preparation as the most important reason for attending college. Finally, first-generation college students “perceive their parents to be less supportive of their decision to attend college” (McConnell, p. 76). As previously discussed, Braxton et al. (1997) postulate 15 propositions of how student perceptions regarding college affect student persistence. This thesis is supported by authors who state that “student entry characteristics affect initial commitments to the institution; initial commitments to the institution influence subsequent levels of institutional commitment; social integration positively influences subsequent institutional commitment, which, in turn, positively affects the likelihood of student persistence in college”. As a result of these theoretical findings, first-generation students stand exposed to academic failure (Elkins et al., 2000, p. 266).

First-generation students are also more likely to be female, older, and more likely to have delayed enrollment in college. Moreover, first-generation students are primarily low-income but, while their families have less income, they personally have more income than most second-generation students because they work for a living, even though they are supporting more dependents (McConnell, 2000). While first-generation students are more likely to be married and have dependents, statistics suggest that many are single working mothers as well (McConnell, 2000).

Moreover, first-generation students “are more likely than their peers to enroll in colleges that offer the program they want and that are close to home and low in cost” (McConnell, 2000, p. 76). That is, they tend to choose a college because of its location and low cost, “not because they are trying to overcome poor academic records” (McConnell, 2000, p. 76).

In addition to demographic differences, first-generation students tend to have lower reading, math, and critical thinking skills than second-generation students (McConnell, 2000). While they are overall poorly prepared academically for college, the time constraints on their lives—due to outside work and supporting dependents—often means they do not enroll in remedial courses in order to offset their deficits (McConnell, 2000). At their first year in college, moreover, first-generation students perform “at somewhat lower rates,” take fewer classes in the humanities and fine arts, study fewer hours and “are less likely to be in honors programs” (McConnell, 2000, p. 79). Because of these deficits first generation students are at much higher risk of dropping out during the first semester of college, more often do not return for the second year, and are less likely to complete their degree (Inman & Mayes, 1999; McConnell, 2000; Riel, 1994).

In terms of their frame of mind, studies have found that “both first- and second-generation students placed equal importance on participating in on-campus activities and on the number of friends they wanted to have by the end of the first year” (McConnell, 2000, p. 79). Nonetheless, first-generation students scored lower on social integration than their peers, primarily because, once again, working and living off-campus intrude upon campus-based social life (McConnell, 2000). In interviews, first-generation students were more likely to state that their friends lived off campus, as did they. Moreover, first-generation students are less likely to be involved in campus organizations, furthering their lack of integration in campus life (McConnell, 2000).

In light of these deficits, and recognizing that the high attrition rates of first-generation students is counterproductive to initiatives to diversify student bodies, many colleges and universities have adopted strategies to improve retention rates for students from first generation and low-income backgrounds (Thayer, 2000).

Because many first-generation students live in homes structured by the mandates of different cultural values (e.g., it is expected that young women stay at home, or commitment to family is more important than personal satisfaction), many first-generation college students also experience stress, bewilderment, and even desolation when coming to college. It is quite common for first-generation students to drop out “very early in the [first] academic year” (Tinto, 1988, p. 444). If one combines a number of factors which mark the first-generation as at-risk, the way to success may be even more difficult for the first-generation student. For example, if the student comes from a low-income home, has weaker cognitive skills, and lower aspirations for college, it is likely that the student will be “less involved with peers and teachers” (Terenzini, 1995, p. 12). Many first-generation students have to live at home, to avoid the costs of on-campus residency, which tends to weaken their integration into college life. Tinto (1995) argues that for a college student to live at home, risks his or her future in college, as “in seeking to avoid the pain of separation, [these students] may fail to perceive the need to adjust to the new demands of college and not become involved in its ongoing intellectual and social life” (p. 445). But, foremost among the reasons for the failure of first-generation to integrate into campus life, is their status as the first members of their family to go to college, as “their past experiences are unlikely to have prepared them for the new life of the college in the same way as have those of persons who come from families that are themselves college educated” (Tinto, 1995, p. 445).

The problems facing first-generation students are exacerbated should they choose to attend a community college. These colleges remain particularly concerned with implementing TRIO SSS programs, as almost 50 percent of all community college students arrive with deficient academic skills (Miller & Alberts, 1994, p. 43), and, as mentioned, 40 percent are first-generation students. Moreover, the climate of community colleges is not conducive to learning the ropes of college life, as “community college students devote half the time and far less

personal involvement in their studies and other activities than do their counterparts in four-year colleges and universities” (Miller & Alberts, 1994, p. 443). As a result of this situation, more and more SSS programs are being instituted in community colleges, but the climate of these schools may impede their success.

The difficulty faced by first-generation students in community colleges is negatively confirmed by the fact that a sub-group of these students, those that seek to transfer from two- to four-year colleges, is particularly vulnerable to failure. Indeed, as the differences in the school culture of these two kinds of institutions appear to be widening, the number of students who seek to transfer from two- to four-year colleges declines. This gap is of particular concern to TRIO SSS programs, as community colleges usually represent the first exposure of first-generation at-risk students to colleges. The reality of the institutional evolution of each kind of college is that the community college is changing from a launching pad to a dead-end for at-risk students.

A special problem of community college first-generation students is that many of them are part-time students. Part-time students constitute a particularly challenged subgroup of at-risk, low-income students. An added difficulty is that because part-time students spend less time on campus, they “choose academic advisors who can accommodate them quickly” (Herndon et al., 1996, p. 645) and, as a result, receive only prescriptive advising. Overall, part-time first-generation community college students “have limited opportunity to receive a holistic form of advising that requires more time” (Herndon et al., 1996, p. 646). For all these reasons, first-generation students remain in jeopardy in college and are greatly in need of the Student Support Services offered to them.

Summary: Theory and Practice in Student Support Services

Theoretical Basis of SSS

It is apparent that SSS programs have evolved in the direction of theory-approved modes of developmental and intrusive advising in order to properly address the problems and needs of at-risk students. However, the theoretical basis for both forms of advising lies in the theoretical formulation of what leads to attrition or retention in college. Integration has been found to be the single-most important factor in the retention of at-risk students in college, and the elements of integration have been formulated in the literature.

Among the models proposed to explain student persistence and attrition (including Alexander Astin's Involvement Model (1975) and Bean's Student Attrition Model (1982)), Vincent Tinto's Student Integration model, also called the interactionist model, appears to have been the basis of most research about retention and attrition in the literature (Thayer, 2000). Tinto believes that "students enter college with various individual characteristics, including those related to family background, individual attributes, and pre-college schooling experiences", (Braxton et al., 1997, p. 110). Embedded within these elements are parental educational level and their expectations for their children's education. Tinto further postulates that a student's level of commitment both to the institution and to the idea of succeeding in college is the result of these background expectations (Braxton et al., 1997). When a student's individual characteristics and expectations mesh with those of the institution, success is likely; when they do not, however, isolation and withdrawal are more likely (Schultz et al., 2001). In other words, students who become "integrated" into the institution succeed, those who do not—fail: "Academically successful students, who persist through graduation, have been found to successfully integrate into the academic and social culture of the institution they attend" (Schultz et al., 2001, p. 209). When integrated, students are more satisfied with the institution, experience

a sense of belonging, and are more committed to achieving their goals at that institution (Schultz et al., 2001). Student departure from a college, according to this perspective, is “a consequence of the interaction between the individual student and the college or university as an organization” (Braxton et al., 1997, p. 108).

Researchers have extended Tinto’s model to take into consideration that the process of integration may be compromised by socioeconomic and ethnic background issues, as well as personal characteristics and goals. Tinto (1982) stated, “It is not elitist to recognize that not all those who enter are equally equipped either in skills and or intellectual capacities to finish a given course of study” (p. 696). He further recognized that individuals who are institutionally marginalized are rarely successful at college (Tinto, 1982). More group-specific models of student disengagement have been elaborated from the integration model, and further study has been undertaken to determine “to what degree and in what fashion the process of dropping out differs among persons of different gender, race, age and social status backgrounds” (Tinto, p. 691). Here, too, the literature confirms that students from low-income families are “far less likely than those in higher income quartiles to earn a bachelor’s degree” (Thayer, 2000, p. 4). Also, first-generation students again emerge as specially challenged with regard to integration, due to differences in family support, transition problems, and previous skills (Thayer, 2000). Indeed, while accepting Tinto’s model of integration, it is increasingly being asked “what does it mean for U.S. Hispanic and Native American students (for example) to be integrated academically...and socially on campus?” (Padilla & Pavel, 1994, p. 144).

Current TRIO and TRIO SSS Program Practice

Of all the TRIO programs, Student Support Services has been studied the most in the literature, and its success is promoted as typical of TRIO programs in general. In 1975 the Educational Testing Service studied Student Support Services and found “few effects on college

performance over what might have been expected from past performance as defined by high school grades” (Chaney & Muraskin et al., 1998, p. 199). In the same study, the authors studied the impact of SSS on retention. The authors identified three measures of retention: to the second year at the same institution, retention to the third year at the same institution and retention to the third year at any institution. The results showed that the SSS program had a positive impact for all three measures of retention, however, the impact varied depending on which services students used and how much they participated.

Mahoney (1998) named four particular characteristics that proved successful for the Student Support Services programs. Staff believed that their SSS program was effective because it was “...responsive, synergistic, supportive, and successful” (p. 381). Mahoney stated that two independent program evaluations were conducted – on and off campus – and these findings confirmed that the SSS program repeatedly achieved its principal goals for student academic performance, retention, and graduation. In this quantitative study, academic performance, continuing enrollment, and graduation data were collected over a four-year period for three groups: all undergraduates, non-SSS students but eligible for SSS, and SSS participants. When measuring grade point average (GPA), Mahoney found that the general undergraduates scored highest (2.77), followed by the SSS participants (2.70), then followed by the non-SSS but eligible students (2.58) (Mahoney, 1998).

In the same study, when measuring retention or continuing enrollment, the author found that SSS participants were retained at the highest rate (72.0%), followed by the general undergraduate population (67.0%), then followed by the non-SSS but eligible students (58.6%). When measuring for graduation rates SSS participants ranked the SSS participants with the highest graduation rate (61.0%), followed by the general undergraduates (56.0%), and then followed by the non-SSS but eligible students (54.9%). These ratings show that students who

were eligible for and who participated in the SSS program performed at a higher rate on each variable (GPA, retention and graduation rates) than those who did not receive the services from SSS (Mahoney, 1998).

Hebert (1997) quantitatively researched the impact of the SSS program services at the University of Connecticut. Hebert's study, which examined the correlates of persistence and achievement, supported the theories that pre-college enrichment and freshman year support programs had a positive impact on the college achievement and persistence of SSS students. Specifically, the study found that cumulative grade point average was a statistically significant predictor of persistence. Hebert also reports that the sample of program participants she evaluated in the study had higher retention rates (74%) at the beginning of their sophomore year than those students who were "regular admits" to the institution (69%).

Another study of SSS found that "students who received a full range of services were more likely to persist than students who received few or no services" (Chaney et al., 1998, p. 199). This report also showed that some pairings of services were more effective than others, but concluded that "there was no clear evidence that one particular kind of service was superior to another" (Chaney et al., 1998, p. 199). In a recent study by the U. S. Department of Education (2003), it was found that participation in Student Support Services resulted in a 7 percent increase in retention rates from the first to second year and a 9 percent increase from the second to third year (Devarics, 1997). Tracking 2,900 students over a three- year period, the study also determined that the greatest overall impact on students occurred during the first year (Devarics, 1997). Overall, when students participated for thirty-two plus hours during freshman year in Student Support Services, was shown to "raise retention rates, grade point averages and credit hours earned by disadvantaged students" (Devarics, p. 5).

One of the primary reasons cited for the success of Student Support Services is that its offerings are “not limited to academic services, but include services designed to increase student integration” (Chaney & Muraskin et al., 1998, p. 198). That is, SSS improves student chances of success in college, according to the theoretical backing of Tinto’s (1975) model. SSS programs are dedicated to providing steady encouragement over time and provide means for helping students to know themselves and their goals. One sub-program, the COMMITMENT program, helps students know their strengths and weaknesses. It has been shown that “a student that has been encouraged to recognize and utilize their strengths and are given tools to improve upon their weaknesses show remarkable improvement in the classroom” (Maxie, 2003, p. 1).

Validity of Mixed Method Research Design

Mixed methodology will be utilized in this proposed study. By making use of both observations of sessions and a survey instrument to obtain information on stakeholder perceptions, I will be utilizing a mixed method research design. It is then significantly noteworthy to discuss the historical relevance and current standing of this research design. The use of such a design is supported extensively by the literature. This section briefly summarizes the history and current status of mixed method research.

The evolution of mixed methods research has been described by historical periods of time. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) discuss these periods as a reference to the emergence of the mixed methodology research. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) maintain that there are four historical periods: “traditional period” and “modernist or Golden Age,” defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), and “ascendance of constructivism” and “pragmatism and the compatibility thesis” defined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003). The authors state that there were significant mixed methods taking place during the traditional period (1900-1950). During this time there

were classic studies especially from the field of sociology that utilized mixed methodology research designs.

During the “modernist” or “Golden Age” period (1950-1970), two major events took place “(a) the debunking of positivism and (b) the emergence of research designs that began to be called ‘multimethod’ or ‘mixed’” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 6). It is important to note that, even though the field of mixed methods had not yet emerged, there were many significant studies conducted at this time that employed the mixed methods approach. This was especially true in the field of psychology. During a psychological study, Campbell and Fiske (1959) are noted as introducing the term “multitrait-multimethod” indicating the use of more than one quantitative method to measure a personality trait. Mixing methodology was used to ensure that the results obtained in studies reflected the trait under study and not the method involved in the study (Creswell, 1994; Rocco et al., 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) call the next historical period, 1970-1990, “the ascendance of constructivism, followed by the paradigm wars” (p. 6). Important events during this timeframe include:

(a) Qualitative methods and constructivism grew rapidly in popularity, (b) The paradigm wars were launched based largely on the incompatibility thesis, (c) Mixed methods studies were introduced in conjunction with writings on triangulation, and (d) Important mixed methods studies and syntheses appeared (p. 6-7).

These events helped promote mixed methods as a legitimate form of research methodology. As a result of these events, the popularity and acceptance of mixed methods has emerged.

The next period Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) call the emergence of “pragmatism and the compatibility thesis” (p. 7). The two important events that are associated with this period are “(a) The pragmatist position was posited as a counterargument to the incompatibility thesis and

(b) Several seminal works appeared aimed at establishing mixed methods as a separate field” (p. 7).

Whether or not one can combine elements from competing paradigms of research remained a topic of intense debate. Because pragmatism states that there indeed is compatibility between qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers can use both methods to enhance a project (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Opponents of mixed method research argue that the quantitative and qualitative paradigms have so many conflicting assumptions underlying their use that they cannot possibly be combined (Smith, 1983; Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Situationists, on the other hand, believe that the specificities of a given situation could allow the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods, or both.

When a new or separate field evolves, so will its terminology. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) discuss some original new terms that were introduced to describe mixed methods data analysis. These include mixed methods data analysis terms such as qualitative contrasting case analysis, qualitative internal replication analysis, and fused data analysis.

Today, there is a general awareness that researchers “need to know and use a variety of methods to be responsive to the nuances of particular empirical questions and the idiosyncrasies of specific situations” (Patton, 2002, p. 585). Mixed method research is now even praised as superior to purist research because it “allows for both the exploratory inductive process that begins with empirical evidence of the particular and proceeds to a level of abstracting/theorizing/generalizing and the confirmatory deductive process of hypothesis testing of theories” (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, & Peres-Prado, 2003, p. 22). Finally, philosophical pragmatists argue that “the integration of methods from differing paradigms is a powerful method to enhance the credibility of the findings” (Petter & Gallivan, 2004, p. 4).

The use of multiple methods, “could provide additional insight because the problem is approached from differing perspectives” (Petter & Gallivan, 2004, p. 1). Such an approach, “establishes a firm foundation of knowledge” (Petter & Gallivan, 2004, p. 1). In recent years, as a result of this train of thought, mixed method research has come to be seen as equal to traditional quantitative or qualitative methods (Creswell, Trout, & Barbuto, 2004). Finally, this truce of the paradigms is “a positive step in advancing knowledge because researchers no longer rely on one method exclusively to examine a research problem” (Petter & Gallivan, 2004, p. 4). More recently, most research in mixed methods has been involved in applying the use of mixed methods to other fields. Mixed method research is now being used in sociology, medicine, organizational and management research, information science, and strategy research, among other fields (Creswell et al., 2004).

Conclusion

Scholarly literature greatly encourages the change from prescriptive to developmental advising as a fundamental element in a Student Support Service program for at-risk students (Frost, 1993; Laff, 1994). In practice, colleges and universities have developed bridge and orientation programs to assist at-risk students in the transition to college life and have also implemented intrusive advising and other programs in order to ensure retention of at-risk students through their first year – often throughout their academic career (McConnell, 2000). Intrusive advising by its nature merges with developmental advising precepts when carried out for extended periods of time.

TRIO programs have been in existence for nearly four decades, but their ability to support students continues to rely on regular resource allocations from the federal government. Managed by an umbrella organization, the Council for Opportunity in Education, the TRIO program operates with approximately \$1 billion in funding (Devarics, 2002). Anecdotal

evidence from funding debates regarding TRIO reveals the belief by many that “TRIO has done some tremendous work” (Fields, 2001, p. 29), even as legislators now call for greater accountability in terms of outcomes and results. TRIO continues to draw support “from a variety of higher education groups which praised the programs’ efforts to recruit low income, first generation students to college” (Devarics, 1997, p. 4). Nonetheless, despite its “successful track record” TRIO “currently serves only 5 percent of eligible students” (Devarics, 1997, p. 4). Nearly 9.6 billion low-income students from middle school to college are deemed to be eligible for support from TRIO, but funding efforts are hard pressed to raise its reach to 10 percent of that population. At present, TRIO serves only 823,000 students, “two thirds of whom come from families below 150% of the poverty level and families in which neither parent graduated from college” (Devarics, 2002, p. 9). Most of the 190 individual TRIO programs across the country serve “fewer than 250 students” each, but that accounts for over 800,000 students at over 1200 colleges and universities (Fields, 2001, p. 31). Recently, TRIO has been forced to further justify its existence and promote findings that, for example, “Student support services students are more than twice as likely to remain in college than those in similar backgrounds not in TRIO” (Fields, p. 31), as two TRIO programs, including Upward Bound, were labeled by the Bush administration as ineffective (Devarics, 2002).

It is therefore necessary to restate that TRIO programs have been shown by the literature to be successful in many ways. TRIO programs “identify promising students (Talent Search), prepare them to do college level (Upward Bound), provide information on academic and financial aid opportunities (Educational Opportunity Centers) and provide tutoring and support services to students once they reach campus (Student Support Services)” (Wolanin, 1997, p. 11). TRIO’s success is undoubtedly based on its solid theoretical grounding, the consistent principles underlying its offerings, and the overall literature on supporting at-risk students in the college

environment. For example, the literature has shown that orientation and retention programs will improve the graduation rates of at-risk students. TRIO SSS programs have been involved in expanding and innovating in orientation and retention programs since their inception. Further, while the literature validates intrusive advising as an important extension of traditional orientation programs to ensure student retention through freshmen year, intrusive advising is found to be the linchpin of structured first year programs in SSS. As the literature has decidedly come down in favor of developmental over traditional prescriptive advising, though acknowledging a gap between theory and practice, the gap does not apparently exist in TRIO Student Support Services, all of which speak the language of developmental advising, focusing on the whole student. Moreover, as the literature on retention is overwhelmingly grounded in Tinto's (1975) model of integration, where academic success is reinforced by successful social integration of the student on campus, many of TRIO SSS's bridge and first year programs embrace the creation of learning communities specifically designed to holistically promote the integration of the student into college life.

Numerous studies have shown that as the TRIO program has matured and become more sensitive to the needs of its target student body of at-risk, low income, first generation students, it has become successful in improving their collegiate experiences. As TRIO programs illustrate the effectiveness of their programs, in large part to defend their funding mandate, it becomes more apparent that its programs have already addressed many problems articulated in the literature. Student Support Services has shown success in delivering services that others are only just now recognizing that all—not simply at-risk—students need. One important issue that the literature fails to address is identifying how SSS programs execute advising services. SSS programs as a whole have been evaluated on retention and graduation rates, yet the advising services within the SSS programs have not been dissected on the specifics of what takes place

during advising sessions and how advising is done. The next chapter will include a discussion on the methodology I employed while conducting this research study.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design of the study and the data collection procedures followed in order to answer the research questions. Population and sample, data collection, data collection instruments, data analysis and research questions will also be reviewed. This chapter also reports on a pilot studies conducted to determine if the instruments proposed for use were able to determine whether the observed advising sessions were developmental or prescriptive in nature.

Research Questions

This study was designed to gain 1) an understanding of the methods TRIO Student Support Services advisors use in their advising sessions with at-risk students, 2) advisees' perceptions of the adequacy of those behaviors in advising sessions, 3) an understanding of the consistencies and inconsistencies among advising type, and 4) a sense of the satisfaction students get from advising based on different advising types. Since the study was designed to illuminate the perceptions of advisors and students independent of one another, the research questions guiding this study were:

1. To what extent and in what ways do Student Support advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students?
2. What are Student Support Services advisors' perceptions of how they advise Student Support Services students?
3. What are Student Support Services students' perceptions of how they are advised by Student Support Services advisors?
4. What are the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type?
5. How does perception of advising type affect students' satisfaction?

Research Design

In order to address the research questions of this study, I applied a mixed method research design employing both personal observation of advising sessions and a survey instrument given to participants after the advising sessions. In order to take into account various features of how students and advisors interact during their sessions, I observed students and advisors during advising sessions. I related the advisor and student behavior that I witnessed to the behaviors indicated as optimum in the advising instrument, Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). After the individual advising sessions, I distributed the AAI to students in order to get their perceptions on how they were being advised. After all the sessions were observed (waiting until this point to avoid impacting advisor behavior), I distributed the AAI to advisors, in order to gain their perceptions on how they are advising students.

Intricacy of Mixed Method Research Design

An ongoing concern of the mixed method research field is how exactly to design such a research project. Mixed method design could use an explanatory or an exploratory design. An explanatory design entails one beginning with quantitative design and then explaining the results with a follow-up qualitative phase; an exploratory design entails one beginning with qualitative data collection and then conducting a larger follow-up quantitative study “in which the attempt is made to generalize from a sample to a population” (Creswell et al., p. 10). In more recent times, triangulation has also come to be seen as a good way to check for the validation of the study. Triangulation, as well, has become a way of confirming results from one method with another method (Rocco et al., 2003).

A special emphasis of mixed method research design in the late 1990s to the present period is concerned with the intricacies of its design. Issues discussed include the feasibility of studies, how to write the research questions properly, the different forms of quantitative and

qualitative data, and how to implement the two forms of data collection in one study (Creswell et al., 2004).

Of particular help in mixed method research design is Tashakkori & Teddlie's (2003) pragmatic framework for understanding why to make use of mixed method research. This framework delineates a mixed method project into three components. In order to undertake a project, one must determine the type of project, the type of data collection and operations, and the type of data analysis and inference that will be involved (Rocco et al., 2003, p. 23). These elements can be combined to create six different frameworks for mixed method research depending on whether one uses quantitative and qualitative data, an explanatory or exploratory investigation, or qualitative or statistical analysis (thus, for example, one type of research design would combine quantitative data, explanatory investigation and statistical analysis, while these elements are arranged differently in five other designs) (Rocco et al., 2003).

In the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Tashakkori, Teddlie, and associates (2003) push beyond the basic designs of mixed method research to further detail aspects of the six different types of design. Further intricacies explored include mixed research designs which the authors term transformative design and nested design (Creswell, 2003)—indicating that various designs have by this point become sophisticated and intricate. The term “transformative” design was built on the term that Greene and Caracelli (1997) used “when they talked about a strong theoretical lens being used in mixed methods research” (Creswell et al., 2004, p. 13). Creswell et al. also advanced what they call a “nested” design, which is an updated version of the “dominant/less-dominant” design Creswell (1994). The nested design is a method that is given less emphasis, but is clearly nested within the other. It might address a different research question or a different unit of study. Finally, the book raises a number of pragmatic issues regarding when it is useful or not to make use of a mixed method

research design and the circumstances in which it would or would not be useful (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The use of mixed method research design is, therefore, supported by a history of development and confirmation plus more recent studies assisting in the complexity of this type of research design.

My study uses concurrent mixed method design and simultaneous analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this study, qualitative data derived from observations were utilized in order to enhance an understanding of stakeholder perceptions. The quantitative results of the administered surveys helped to confirm or counter the results from the advising session observations.

Population and Sample

Two populations were targeted for this study. The first population consisted of TRIO SSS advisors, all of whom typically had backgrounds in either the social sciences, counseling or education. As per the requirements of the participating TRIO SSS programs, all advisors possess a master's degree in one of the following: student services, counseling, social work, student personnel, education, or any other credentials that were deemed relevant to the student population.

The second population in the study consisted of students who were current participants in the TRIO SSS program. Students eligible to receive TRIO SSS advising must have been one or a combination of the following characteristics: first-generation college student, low-income student, and/or a student with a disability. By qualifying for TRIO SSS on the basis of one of these criteria, all participating students were also classifiable as at-risk of college failure.

A sample of advisors consisted of at least five Student Support Services advisors at three public universities in the state of Louisiana, which for the purposes of confidentiality are not

named. The other sample consisted of students participating in the specified SSS programs. I observed five advising sessions per advisor, which totaled observations of 25 different students.

Advisor Sample

In order to obtain both advisor and student samples, two types of sampling techniques were used. Purposive sampling was employed in the study for both advisor and student samples. To begin to acquire both advisor and student samples, I first contacted the Student Support Services program directors at three institutions in the state of Louisiana that funds SSS grants. I explained the research project to the directors and asked them to participate in the study. While all three initial SSS programs agreed to participate in the study, I would have continued to contact other SSS programs across the state until there were three SSS programs and five advisors willing to participate if all three did not agree to participate. All SSS programs were considered examples of a typical case; therefore, purposive sampling was employed in choosing SSS programs and advisors to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is “designed to enhance understandings of selected individuals or groups’ experiences” (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p. 2). Traditionally purposive sampling is found to work best in order to fill out the qualitative design of the study, by choosing typical cases, deviant or extreme cases, or negative or disconfirming cases (Devers & Frankel, 2000). In other words, typical cases represent those cases that are considered usual or truly representative of the population. Contrary to typical cases are deviant or extreme cases which represent the unexpected or radical case. These two types are on either end of a continuum. The last type of case is negative or disconfirming cases which represent cases that refute or disprove the typical cases. If the participating SSS programs and advisors are “information rich,” then the use of purposive sampling would be in order to improve results (Devers & Frankel, 2000).

In this study, all SSS programs are considered typical cases because all SSS student participants are verified as disadvantaged or at-risk students. Even though all SSS programs are determined to be typical cases, the three institutions were chosen to represent extreme cases and typical cases based on admissions standards. One institution (University of State = US) represented a public university with one of the highest admissions policies in the state of Louisiana. Another institution (Southern Community College = SCC) represented a public university with one of the lowest admissions policies in the state of Louisiana. These two universities represented extreme cases. High admissions criteria implies that students attending that particular institution needs less academic attention than those students attending a university having low admissions criteria in place. Lastly, an institution (Metropolitan University = MU) that was considered to have average admissions criteria in the state of Louisiana was also selected to represent a typical case.

After the consent forms (Appendix A) were signed and collected, I called participating advisors in order to ensure that they understood the project and answered remaining questions. I also made appointments with advisors and arranged for observing the advising sessions. In this capacity, in this study, the advisors also served as key informants, defined in the literature as people who have more knowledge than others about the topic under study (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996).

Student Sample

I employed a purposive sampling technique in order to establish the SSS student sample. Purposive sampling for the student sample occurred in the same fashion as for the advisor sample. As previously stated, the study incorporated five different student advising sessions with five different advisors from three institutions. Students represented universities with low

admission policies and high admission policies to represent extreme cases and average admission policies to represent typical cases.

Because time was of the essence for data collection and data analysis, data collection occurred between February and April of 2005 at the participating SSS programs. The timing of the observations was chosen to ensure typical advising sessions rather than sessions heavily concentrated on specific activities like class scheduling and registration. This approach was to observe sessions more typical of the kinds of activities and topics discussed throughout the semester.

I had planned to observe approximately five sessions with each of the five participating advisors. However, one program had set up group advising sessions; therefore, instead of 25 different observations, I observed 23 sessions – yet still observing 25 students and three advisors. I spent one or two days with each advisor, which yielded a sufficient amount of advising sessions. Before beginning each session, I explained the study to each student and asked for the student's permission for him or her to participate in the study. After gaining permission, the sessions and observations began. After each session, I distributed the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) to each student, in order to better measure his or her perspective on the advising session. After observing the fifth advising session with each advisor, I gave each advisor the AAI to complete, in order to preclude suggesting or modeling their behavior in the advising sessions. Observations concluded at the end of the fifth advising session with each advisor.

Initial contact with directors, advisors and students only occurred after I gained official approval from the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board and the institutional review boards from the participating universities. This precaution was taken to ensure that all procedures and protocol are followed, in order to protect the confidentiality of the population, both the advisors and students of Student Support Services.

Data Collection

Data collection began with observing the advising sessions. During the advising sessions, I observed the behaviors exhibited by both students and advisors. I took notes, but also had available a checklist which was developed by Daller et al. (1997). The checklist provided operationalizing behaviors associated with developmental and prescriptive advising in the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B).

After the advising sessions, I distributed the AAI to student participants. The results of student responses to the AAI questions provided insight into student perceptions of advising behaviors represented and encountered in the advising session. The AAI survey also provided me with information by the SSS student participants on their own behavior (for example, the kinds of questions students ask, who initiates the contact, what topics students address) during the session and their perceptions on which type of behaviors were present or absent during the delivery of the services.

After observing the fifth session with each advisor, I also distributed the AAI to each advisor. Results from this survey revealed advisor perceptions about the kinds of behavior they themselves exhibited in the session and ideas and trends that emerged in the session. I administered the AAI to advisors only after I had completed observing all of their sessions. This was done in order to ensure that the advisors were not familiar with the AAI should it cause them to anticipate responses and change their advising behavior during the session. While this precaution ensures an appraisal of the advisors' behavior, it limits the results to those behaviors which were exhibited in the context of those particular given advising sessions. In other words, advisors' assessments of their behaviors were limited to those behaviors exhibited in the five particular advising sessions and may not be truly representative of advising activities and behaviors that would be exhibited if I were observing the advisor for a longer period of time. By

collecting data on both student and advisor perceptions of the advising session, information was obtained to address the quality of the session, if any meaningful advice was given, and if the student and advisor had similar or different perceptions of the efficacy of the session.

Academic Advising Inventory

The data collection instrument supporting my observations was the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). The AAI is rooted in the idea that two kinds of advising exist, either developmental or prescriptive advising (Crookston, 1972). I was therefore able to measure student and advisor perceptions against a continuum of developmental and prescriptive advising by using this instrument.

The AAI was developed by researchers in order to measure three aspects of the advising process. Part I of the AAI measures the nature of advising relationships as seen along a developmental-prescriptive continuum, Part II of the AAI measures the frequency of activities taking place during advising sessions, and Part III of the AAI determines the satisfaction with the advising services. Part IV of the AAI provides information on the demographics of students and advisors in the advising situation.

Part I of the AAI, which measures the nature of advising relationships, consists of 14 items which compose the Developmental-Prescriptive Advising Scale (DPA). The DPA measures the nature of advising relationships as well as the range of topics and/or concerns addressed during actual advising sessions. The 14 items in the scale measure the continuum of developmental and prescriptive activities during advising sessions, with each item providing two positions. For example, in one pair of scenarios, the advisor is described as either being interested in helping the student learn how to find out about courses and programs, or as one who tells the student what they need to know about academic courses and programs. After reading each pair of scenarios, students are instructed to choose which of the two best fits what they have

experienced during advising sessions. Once they have chosen one of the pair, then the student is to rate how true that scenario is for them (from “very true” to “slightly true”). Again, these scenarios represent the continuum of developmental and prescriptive advising. For a summary of the AAI, see Table 1 below.

Table 1

Academic Advising Inventory – Part I – Subscales of Developmental-Prescriptive Advising Scale (DPA)

<u>DPA Subscale</u>	<u>DPA Subscale</u>	<u>DPA Subscale</u>
Personalizing Education (PE)	Academic Decision-Making (ADM)	Selecting Courses (SC)
Learning about courses and programs	Registration of classes	Suggestion of courses
Vocational opportunities	Alternatives to difficulties	The use of test scores and grades to determine courses
Outside class activities	Major or career	
Use of test scores and grades to determine academic goals	Academic progress	
Registration of classes		
Time management and study skills		
Expectations of advising		
Interests other than academic		

Within Part I of the AAI, there are three subscales: Personalizing Education (PE), Academic Decision-Making (ADM), and Selecting Classes (SC). PE is measured by eight of the

14 items (items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13). This subscale addresses both academic and personal interests and matters. PE addresses the total student and includes goal setting, extracurricular activities, and identification and utilization of campus resources. ADM is measured by four of the 14 items (items 6, 7, 11, 14). This subscale concentrates on the processes and responsibilities for academic decision-making. For example, “my advisor suggests what I should major in” or “my advisor suggests steps I can take to help me decide on a major.” The SC subscale specifically deals with the process of determining course needs and with the process of planning suitable class schedule. This is represented by two items (items 2 and 12). This subscale measures whether or not the advisor tells students what they think is best for them, or if the advisor suggests considerations and allows the student to ultimately make the final decision for himself or herself.

Part II of the AAI, Advisor-Advisee Activity Scale, is composed of 30 items that constitute five subscales to describe activities that typically take place during advising sessions. Part II instructions are for students to consider the listed activities that occur during advising sessions, then rate the frequency of each activity the student and advisor engaged in during an academic year. The frequency scale ranged from “none” to “five or more” times. The five subscales within Part II include: Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR); Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP); Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS); Teaching Personal Skills (TPS); and Academic Majors and Courses (AMC). A summary of activities comprising Part II of the AAI is provided in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of Academic Advising Inventory – Part II – Advisor-Advisee Activity Scale

<u>AAI Part II Subscales</u>				
Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR)	Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP)	Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS)	Teaching Personal Skills (TPS)	Academic Majors and Courses (ADM)
Personal values	Transfer credit/policies	Registration forms	College policies	Possible majors
Social issues	Advanced placement	Dropping or adding courses	Study skills or tips	Course content
Personal concerns	Probation and dismissal	Course selection	Time management	Career alternatives
Internship opportunities	Financial aid	Planning a schedule		Campus resources
Personal goals	Other special academic programs			Degree requirements
Academic progress				Declaring or changing a major
Rapport				

(Table Continued)

Extracurricular activities				
Job placement opportunities				
Purposes of a college education				
Class experiences				

The PDIR subscale is composed of 12 items (items 18, 20, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44). These items include activities that surround discussing classroom activities and extracurricular activities, personal concerns, short-term and long-term goals, and exchanges that aid in building trust and rapport between the student and advisor. Five items make up the EIP subscale (items 24, 25, 27, 28, 33). Types of typical activities in this scale revolve around academic rules and procedures, identifying and referring students to appropriate institutional programs or offices, and general information about the institution. RCS is another subscale in Part II (items 16, 17, 22, 23). These items focus on activities concerning planning for and adjusting class schedules. The TPS subscale is composed of three items (items 15, 30, 42). Some personal skills that are typically addressed are college policies, time management tips, study and test taking skill techniques. The last subscale is the AMC (items 19, 21, 26, 29, 31, 41). These activities include possible majors, requirements and courses in different majors, how to declare a major at that institution, and possible career options.

Part III of the AAI relates to various opinions of students' satisfaction with the advising received during the academic year. Students are to respond to the five items by using a four-

point Likert scale which ranges from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” This part is composed of five items (items 45-49) which measure general overall satisfaction, accuracy of information received, adequacy of notice about important timelines and deadlines, advisor availability, and sufficient time dedicated to advising session.

Part IV of the AAI constitutes the last eight questions of the survey. This part elicits demographic information regarding the student completing the survey: sex, age, cultural background, and class standing. Part IV also invites students to respond to information regarding the type and frequency of advising received during the academic year. For example, one question asks students how many advising sessions students participated in during the academic year.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis for Qualitative Data

Audiotape recording was used when observing advising sessions with SSS participants and advisors. After each day of observations, the tapes were transcribed according to tape-based analysis. Tape-based analysis entails the researcher listening carefully to the tape and preparing an abridged transcript. This transcript includes descriptive, summary statements that is “based on raw data followed by illustrative examples of raw data...[and] provide[s] typical or illuminating quotes” (Krueger, 1994, p. 131). Transcription assisted in confirming the data that was detected in the advising observations. By recording and transcribing the sessions, I could listen and re-listen to the tape recording as well as reading and rereading the transcription. This helped to ensure that nothing was missed when I observed the advising sessions.

Observations were originally going to be tracked on the original Observation checklist and protocol (Appendix C) in order to record my impressions of advising behaviors and content during the advising session observations. After reviewing the original checklist, I noticed that it

did not completely conform to the subsales of Part II of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). For example, the original checklist (Appendix C) had a section called “Providing Information” and did not have a section called “Academic Majors and Courses.” I made the appropriate changes so that the checklist fully coordinated with the AAI and named it “Revised Observation Protocol” (Appendix D). Data collection and data interpretation took place simultaneously. The observation sheet allowed me to record the activities that occurred in the session and recorded the advising behaviors or nature of the advising session. The advisor-advisee relationship was analyzed by the way the advisor addresses the student. This part of the observation sheet was developed to identify the nature of advisor’s behavioral styles, either developmental or prescriptive. The intent was to determine the correspondence between developmental advising behaviors as proposed in the literature and what was observed during sessions. Specifically, I checked off the topics discussed during the advising session and took notes as well on how the topics were discussed. I looked over and labeled the notes as developmental or prescriptive advising. The notes on the nature of the advising relationship were also addressed and labeled as developmental or prescriptive. Notes from both sheets consisted of raw data that were analyzed based on the literature which defined developmental and prescriptive developmental behaviors.

Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative research, which relies on measures of reliability and validity to evaluate the utility of a study, qualitative research can be evaluated by its “trustworthiness.” Coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is considered an important component of any qualitative research study. Trustworthiness is representative of the following qualitative constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The first construct of trustworthiness is credibility. True value, or credibility, relates to questions such as: Do conclusions of this research make sense? Do conclusions authentically

represent the phenomena of interest? Do conclusions adequately describe research participants? These questions pertain to the concept of credibility which is similar to the notion of internal validity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this research, the credibility of findings was determined by the degree in which interpretations of the data were supported by the data.

Transferability is another construct that ensures trustworthiness. Transferability is similar in concept to the external validity of quantitative studies. It attempts to ascertain if the results of the current study relate to other contexts and can therefore be transferred to other contexts. In short, transferability refers to the applicability of findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The next construct of trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability in qualitative research is similar to the quantitative concept of reliability. Dependability refers to whether or not the research results are consistent over time and across researchers. In other words, it assesses whether or not another researcher would likely find similar results when the study is duplicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Confirmability is the last construct to guarantee trustworthiness. Confirmability assumes that the conclusions of a study are reflective of participants' perspectives, as evident in the data rather than on my personal biases and subjectivity. A certain impartiality or neutrality should exist in the presentation of conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Triangulation

In order to further enhance trustworthiness, I employed triangulation, peer debriefing, and provide a rich description. Triangulation assisted in eliminating biases that may sway conclusions. This was done by depending on more than one method, theory, or source (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). To accomplish triangulation, one would incorporate several different methods

of data collection; use different theories to frame the study; or engage in methods with different individuals on the research topic. Observing advising sessions along with distributing a survey instrument to current SSS advisors and students satisfies triangulation as a trustworthiness measure given that I utilized multiple methods of gathering information (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing was another method used to ensure trustworthiness. Peer debriefing is the process of exposing the research material to a disinterested and an uninvested peer. The method allows this objective individual access to aspects of the study that may typically remain exclusive to the researcher. This allows the peer to uncover any hidden researcher bias and to clarify interpretations (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Generally, the dependability of the study is enhanced by providing a detailed account of the methods that were used in each aspect of the research plan, thus enabling another researcher to replicate the process. The peer debriefer was asked to comment on the clarity and detail provided regarding the research plan and its potential for consistency over time and across researchers.

Thick Description

While qualitative research typically is not required to demonstrate generalizability, I provided a rich and detailed description of participants' perspectives. Through this account, I offered ample information to allow readers to make their own decisions about the applicability of findings to alternate contexts.

Data Analysis for Quantitative Data

Data analysis for the AAI involved the use of descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics used in this study include sums, means, and standard deviations based on the AAI survey instrument.

Established Reliability and Validity of AAI

The Academic Advising Inventory was developed by Winston and Sandor in 1984 in order to provide a systematic plan for evaluation in advising programs. The survey was developed to help answer two types of questions: “How well is the program progressing or operating on a day-to-day basis?” and “What were outcomes of the programs or what differences did advising make in students’ lives?” It was also designed to measure three aspects of academic advising: The nature of advising relationships, seen along a developmental-prescriptive continuum (Part I), the frequency of activities taking place during advising sessions (Part II), and satisfaction with advising (Part III). The development of the instrument began in 1983 and was based on five studies conducted at different colleges and universities using various forms of the instrument.

Internal consistency reliability for the Developmental-Prescriptive Advising Scale (DPA) and its subscales was estimated through the use of the Cronbach Alpha procedure. The alpha coefficient for the DPA was .78. The coefficients for the subscales Personalizing Education (PE), Academic Decision-Making (ADM), and Selecting Courses (SC) were found to be .81, .66, and .42 respectively. The authors confirm that the DPA and its subscales are homogeneous and stable enough measures to use with groups of students. The authors also assert that the subscales seem to be independent measures and used the Pearson-product moment correlation among the DPA and its subscales. The authors calculated means, standard deviations, and factor loadings for the items in the DAP and its subscales were calculated and reported. The authors used *t*-tests and analysis of variance to investigate whether the demographic characteristic variables produced any statistically significant differences among groups (Winston & Sandor, 1986).

Validity of the DPA Scale was estimated in two ways – contrasted groups and correlations with categories of activities in Part II of the AAI. In order to measure construct

validity the authors chose two groups of students at the University of Georgia who would be expected to perceive advising differently from each other. One group was students who were specially admitted to the university who were “academically-marginally-prepared freshmen” (Winston & Sandor, 1986, p. 19) who would be receiving intensive instruction in reading, English, and/or mathematics. This group was assigned a professionally trained counselor as the advisor. Students met in a class setting twice weekly and occasionally privately with the advisor. The goals were to assist student in overcoming academic deficiencies by providing support, teach students academic and personal coping skills, and encourage realistic personal and career goals (Winston & Sandor, 1986).

The comparison group was regularly-admitted freshman with no remediation needed in coursework. Students in this group were advised by a wide variety of University personnel including part-time professional advisors and faculty members. Generally, students saw their advisor once a quarter for approximately 20-30 minutes and topics revolved around planning and scheduling courses. The authors then administered the DPA scale to both groups and found that the DPA and the PE were statistically significant from each other at the pre-established alpha level ($p < .001$). Although it was not determined that the ADM and SC scores proved to be significantly significant, the authors attribute this possibility to the fact that there was little difference in the approaches used in the advisors of both groups when assisting students with academic decision-making and scheduling courses. However, the authors note that “on all measures both groups reported that their advising fell on the ‘developmental’ end of the continuum” (Winston & Sandor, 1986, p. 20).

Part I of the AAI was then correlated with Part III of the AAI, which pertains to students’ reported satisfaction with advising they received during the current year. Overall, the authors

found that the more “developmental” the students perceive the relationship to be, the higher the level of satisfaction of academic advising students report (Winston & Sandor, 1986).

Authenticity and Trustworthiness of the AAI Observation Protocol

The AAI Observation Protocol was designed by Daller, Creamer, and Creamer (1997) and tested by piloting the checklist with two Professional Advisors who did not participate in the final study’s sample. This test enabled the authors to assess the appropriateness and practicality of the checklist. After the pilot study was complete, the test of the protocol was conducted in the presence of an expert on academic advising who offered suggestions on the content and procedures of the protocol. A panel of experts also reviewed the checklist and made suggestions to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the observation checklist sheet.

Pilot Study I

Originally, I planned to review official documents (folder review) as a data collection method. I implemented a pilot study to test the assumption that the data collection method of reviewing official documents would yield significant data. Part of my data analysis included reviewing student folders in order to get a better understanding of what types of advising took place in the Student Support Services (SSS) program. My intent for this data analysis was to determine if the advising was prescriptive or developmental based on advisor notes during advising sessions.

Official documents refer to those types of documents produced by employees as a matter of record-keeping or circulation purposes like faxes, memos, and summary of services. These are often utilized to study bureaucratic or governmental language or procedure. These types of documents are usually plentiful ranging from minutes from meetings to pamphlets. Researchers usually view these documents as subjective and self-serving as these documents are used for

merit or promotion. For this reason, many researchers exclude them from relevant data; however, qualitative researchers revel in this type of subjective data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

One kind of official document that was particularly important to this pilot study was student records. Traditionally, researchers accessed files on students to conduct research; however, many researchers believe that the information is inaccurate. In this pilot study, student folders were reviewed not necessarily for information on the student but rather on what the advisor did or said in the session with the student. Folder evaluation should have revealed not only advising behaviors but also how the advisor performed behaviors.

I am currently employed as one of four advisors in a Student Support Services program. For this pilot study, I chose to review five randomly selected folders from one of the other three advisors. I utilized a checklist of activities that was designed to correspond with the 30 items of Part II of the AAI (Appendix B). The checklist was developed from Part II of the AAI because this part focuses on the actual activities that are potentially done during advising sessions. Folders selected were those of students who were enrolled at Nicholls State University and enrolled in Student Support Services.

The folders are designed in such a way that there is a separate packet of information for each semester that the student was enrolled in the granting institution and the SSS program. In each packet were standard items: folder checklist sheet, trial schedule, educational plan, and referral forms. When reviewing the folder and folder packets, I checked appropriate activities on the checklist designed by Daller, Creamer, and Creamer (1997) that coordinated with what was reported by advisor in the folder. For example, if the advisor reported that she discussed study habits and time management with the student, then I checked this off on the checklist under Teaching Personal Skills (TPS).

The folder checklist sheet, the trial schedule, and the educational plan all provide information relevant to the student. These forms yielded information that was relevant to the checklist sheet. Referral sheets were the most telling of the forms in the student's folders. The referral sheets are forms that advisors complete after or during the advising session with students. The advisor writes a narrative on the types of topics discussed and activities done during the session. If advisors need to refer students to another department or office on or off campus, the advisor makes a note on the referral sheet as well. The advisor must make these notes to reflect what transpired during the session in order to recall subject areas or problems discussed previously in order to appropriately follow-up with the student.

Some semester packets have other items included. Other items that are not consistent in every folder are such things as letters of recommendation, welcome letters, notices to students to report to their advisor, copies of drop slips, copies of resignation slips, and copies of change of major slips. Again, not every folder will have these items because every student has different needs.

After reviewing each student's folder and after I had all of the checklists completed, I evaluated what I was actually able to discern from the information. I learned that I was unable to ascertain whether the advising sessions were examples of descriptive advising or prescriptive advising. The main thing I accomplished from this pilot project was discovering that I could only get an idea of what actual activities were executed during sessions yet not understand how these activities were performed. Folder review yielded data describing what activities were done or what topics were covered; however, it did not yield data describing how the activities took place.

I also learned more about the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) that I distributed as part of my dissertation methodology. The AAI was developed by Winston and Sandor (1984)

and is designed to measure the developmental – prescriptive advising continuum. The AAI survey will enable me to gather information from SSS participants on their experiences with SSS advising sessions and their satisfaction of these services.

Pilot Study II

I implemented another brief pilot study by observing a Student Support Services (SSS) co-worker in an advising session with a SSS student. The pilot study was done to help me determine exactly how I would utilize the checklist and observation protocol as a tool for my study.

After introducing myself to the student and briefly explaining my presence, I verbally asked for the student's consent for the observation in the presence of her advisor. The student agreed to the observation and the session began.

I sat in the corner of the office and discretely observed the session. The advisor and student discussed many of the topics listed on the checklist. From the EIP section of the checklist the student and advisor discussed college policies, transfer credits, and exempting courses. From the PI section, both discussed content of courses, financial aid, and other offices on campus. From the PDIR section, they discussed personal values, possible majors, degree requirements, personal concerns, evaluating academic progress, getting to know each other, and experiences in different classes. All four topics from the RCS category were performed during the session: dropping or adding courses, signing registration forms, selecting courses for next term, and planning class schedule for next term. From the TPS section, only time management was discussed.

I found that both prescriptive and developmental advising were performed during this particular advising session. Next to each activity, I marked whether it was considered developmental or prescriptive. I also noted specifically how or if the advising session was

personalized, who took responsibility for making final decisions, and how courses were selected for the upcoming term.

I found that activities discussed and behaviors exhibited were primarily developmental. The session turned prescriptive when the conversation revolved around answering questions that the student posed. An example would include the student wanting information on what classes were offered at a particular time and information on content and number of hours of a seminar course. Another example is the advisor giving specific information regarding the registration process including times and dates. Because the advisor has an educational background in the same field as the major of the student, the student looked to the advisor as an expert in answering specifics especially about the major and about course content.

During the session, the overall topic of discussion was focused on registration and planning a course schedule for the next term. Even though registration was the prime topic of discussion, the advisor behaved developmentally in a number of ways. First, the advisor and student worked together in brainstorming possible classes student could take for next term. During the conversation, the advisor posed a question regarding how the student's proposed schedule would affect her financial aid. The advisor took an active role in looking up the student's academic record and both discussed how she was progressing toward her degree. At one time, the advisor gave the student some suggestions on adding a minor to her degree in order to aid in finding courses for next term. She referred the student to her academic college on matters of transfer credit and course substitution. The advisor and student discussed the student's work and personal schedule and considered them when deciding on courses for next term. These examples of developmental advising were taken from the checklist; however, the advisor also showed developmental behaviors when addressing these behaviors in terms of the nature of the advising relationship.

The advisor also displayed developmental behaviors by personalizing the advising session. The advisor addressed the student by name, faced the student, looked her in the eye when talking, acknowledged her feelings, used humor with student, used active listening skills, had a sense of an equal relationship between advisor and student, and advisor remembered and asked about her personal life as well as academic life.

The advisor gave suggestions and options, but the final decision making activities seemed to rest on the student. At one point, the student asked the advisor's opinion on a matter. The advisor gave her opinion as well as other options and told the student that "the ultimate decision is yours." The decisions on selecting courses also seemed to rest on the student. Both advisor and student looked up the student's curriculum and discussed courses the student had remaining to complete her degree. The student then told the advisor what she wanted for the next term. Even though the advising session was mixed with developmental and prescriptive advising, overall, I found that the session was developmental based on the way the activities and topics were discussed.

By performing this pilot study, I found that the list section of the checklist enabled me to determine and verify the topics of discussion, and the notes section of the checklist enabled me to expand on how the activities were delivered. The checklist is directly related to Part II of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). Another part of the observation protocol called Nature of Advising Relationship provided me a way to document how the advising session was personalized and how decisions were made. These two areas are directly related to the Personalizing Education and Academic Decision Making areas of Part I of the AAI; however, the Selection Courses area of Part I of the AAI was not addressed in the original observation protocol. Therefore, I added a question that specifically deals with how selecting courses is achieved in advising sessions.

Methodology to Address Each Research Question

To address the research questions, I utilized a mixture of methodology. To address question one, regarding the implementation of advising services SSS advisors use to employ developmental and prescriptive advising, I used a qualitative methodology. I observed advising sessions and utilized the checklist section, note taking section, and nature of advising section of the worksheet. I checked off activities done and topics discussed on the checklist and wrote notes on how these items were accomplished. I labeled my notes as being developmental or prescriptive based on my understanding of these advising behaviors as related to developmental and prescriptive advising theory. I also utilized the nature of advising relationship section of the observation protocol to define how the session was personalized, how decisions were made, and how courses were selected. Again, I labeled and defined the behaviors as being developmental and prescriptive based on advising theory.

Question two, involving the SSS advisors' perceptions of their own advising behaviors, and question three, concerning SSS students' perceptions of advising behaviors, were addressed by administering the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). The inventory yielded quantitative data that concluded both advisors' and students' perceptions of the type of advising that was executed in the advising sessions. Descriptive data on answers to the AAI survey included sums and means of scores which aided in concluding what transpired during particular advising sessions.

To address question four, regarding the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type, I compared what I observed during sessions by using the data from the checklist and from the nature of advising section to the results from the AAI survey taken by advisors and students. Specifically, I compared frequency of activity and perception of developmental or prescriptive from the AAI to my data collected during observations. I also

compared advisors' answers on the AAI to students' answers. This resulted, more specifically, in concluding the similarities and differences of advisors' and students' perceptions of what occurred during particular advising sessions.

To address the last question, pertaining to students' satisfaction of advising behavior, I originally planned to correlate students' answers to the AAI on Part I (concerning the developmental and prescriptive continuum) to answers on Part III of the AAI (concerning satisfaction levels of advising services). However, based on a lack of variance and a small sample size, correlation data did not yield notable results. I then decided to calculate mean scores from students' responses to Part I of the AAI and Part III of the AAI, rank these means and compute a sign test. In other words, I implemented quantitative methods by ranking mean scores of the developmental scale and subscales on the AAI (Part I) to the ranked scores of the satisfaction questions (AAI Part III). I also analyzed the qualitative data from the open-ended questions from the satisfaction part of the AAI (Part III). This yielded data that revealed the pattern of developmental advising and how satisfied students reported they were with SSS advising services.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study derive from the fact that it is focused solely on the TRIO Student Support Services advising and the population and sample are advisors and students who participate in the SSS program at only three institutions. The literature indicates that the advising of at-risk students may be quite different from advising of achieving students in the mainstream of a college student body. Moreover, at-risk students may respond to their advising differently than students who are not part of the at-risk population. As a result, this study is focused on improving Student Support Services and is not generalizable to the advising community at large, either advisors or students.

Another limitation of the study is that even though the student population and sample are all considered to be “at-risk,” there are differences in students’ academic abilities based on the type of institution students attended. The study employed low level, average level, and high level of academic admissions institutions. Therefore, while all population and sample students are “at-risk,” they are also non-homogenous based on different academic skill levels. Again, this could affect the generalizability of the study.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a mixed methodology research agenda designed to address students’ and advisors’ perceptions of advising services provided by the federally funded Student Support Services Program. The research plan is also designed to address the extent and ways that Student Support Services advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students. A brief history of the evolution of mixed methods was discussed, and a rationale for utilizing a mixed methodology was offered. A detailed research plan, including methods for data collection and analysis, were presented. Two pilot studies were discussed and finally, the methods that will be used to enhance trustworthiness of findings were described as well as the existing reliability and validity for the Academic Advising Inventory survey instrument. The next chapter will report the findings of the implemented study.

Findings

This chapter will present my findings related to the five research questions in a case study format. Because case studies usually include illustrative and descriptive material, I chose to present study findings in this manner. I wanted to share descriptive information, such as program location, office set-up, and advisor and student demographic information, for each institution and felt that case studies would be the most appropriate format. The Student Support Services programs from Metropolitan University, Southern Community College, and University of State are discussed and each research question is addressed for each SSS program at each participating institution.

Case Study of Metropolitan University

Metropolitan University (MU) is a public, four-year institution located in an urban city in Louisiana. Metropolitan University is one of many Louisiana post-secondary institutions that are considered to have average admissions policies. Observations of the Student Support Services (SSS) program at MU occurred during the first week of February 2005, which was during the third week of the semester and three weeks before mid-semester.

The SSS program was located on the first floor in one of the main academic buildings on MU's campus. The SSS program was positioned within a suite of offices that also houses all of the other TRIO programs at MU. The advisors and the director were all situated within the office suite. When entering the suite, one can find a clerical person that can answer questions and direct students to the appropriate office. The SSS personnel offices were quite easy to find and seemed to be in a central location on the MU campus – especially since the building is located near the MU University Center and Bookstore and University Fitness and Recreation Center.

The SSS program utilized groups for advising sessions with a maximum of six students per group session. Advisors asked students to sign up for sessions on a piece of paper outside the advisors' offices. The sign-up sheet had the dates and times of the sessions and students were to list their telephone numbers next to their names. Students are required to attend at least three advising sessions per semester; however, students may drop in for additional sessions they need to address other issues individually.

The two advisors had small offices and the space seemed crowded especially when trying to accommodate up to six students in the room. Both offices were supplied with computers and storage space. Both offices were also cluttered with stacks of paper, books and folders. I felt cramped and uncomfortably restricted. I noticed that both advisors had flyers posted and some pictures of family and friends around the rooms giving off a personal feel.

Research Question One – MU

I utilized observations to answer research question one which asks, "To what extent and in what ways do Student Support Services (SSS) advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students?" I observed two SSS advisors and 10 SSS students at the MU SSS program. The advising sessions were implemented in groups. I observed three different groups. There were four students (three who agreed to participate in the study) in the first group with the first advisor, five students in the second group with the second advisor, and two students in the third group I observed with the first advisor. The two advisors I observed at MU were Flo and Tonie. The five students I observed with Flo were Dian, Ben, Tina, Rose, and Kila. The five students I observed with Tonie were Janice, Steve, Kiki, Syd, and John.

Flo was an African American female advisor and Tonie was a white female advisor. The students were a diverse group. Janice (19 year old freshman), Kiki (19 year old freshman) and

Syd (22 year old senior) were all Indian students. Tina (19 years old) and Steve (20 years old) were both Hispanic sophomores. John and Rose were both 20 year old Asian American students. There were two African American female students, Kila (21 year old junior) and Dian (19 year old sophomore). One male student, Ben, was a 19 year old freshman who did not respond to the ethnicity question. Of the 10 students, six were verified as being both low-income and first-generation students; three students were verified as first-generation only; one student was verified as low-income only.

As I observed each group session at MU, I recorded the activities and topics discussed in the groups on the revised checklist and on the nature of the advising relationship sheet (Appendix D) that correspond to the activities and topics relayed on the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). As previously stated, I noticed that the original Observation checklist did not completely conform to the subscales of Part II of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). I made the appropriate changes so that the checklist fully coordinated with the AAI and named it "Revised Observation Protocol" (Appendix D). I logged the information that was addressed to all students in the group on one checklist sheet. Some information, questions, and topics that were discussed were only relevant to one of the students in the group. Separate sheets were used to record specific information for specific students. I coded each checklist and inventory for all students to ensure that the information for each student was kept together.

After the observations, I transcribed the sessions from the tape recordings. As I listened to the recordings and after transcribing the recordings, I reevaluated and made corrections to the information I logged on the checklist and the information I wrote on the nature of the advising relationship. I then assessed whether the topics and activities conveyed developmental or prescriptive advising based on developmental and prescriptive theory.

I concluded that even though both types of advising were implemented in all three sessions by both advisors, the overall tone of the sessions, topics and activities discussed, and the nature of advising relationships all reflected developmental advising styles.

The advising sessions took on a holistic approach because both advisors covered information that was not only academic in nature, but also covered non-academic issues. Both advisors had a list of topics that they covered with all students in this first session of the semester. At first, this seemed to be a very prescriptive approach; however, I soon resolved that the sessions were developmental based on the range of topics discussed. The advisors addressed two of the five topics in the Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP) section, which is the first section of the observation checklist. The MU advisors addressed financial aid and special academic programs. Information on the financial aid process was discussed including how and when to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), utilizing the world wide web to complete the FAFSA, encouraging students to find other funding sources like scholarships to fund their education, and information on stipends on the MU campus. While talking with students about applying for additional types of scholarships and stipends, the advisors said things like, “Our students win!” and “SSS students are good competitors for all kinds of awards and money.”

The other EIP topic that was discussed was special academic programs. One advisor particularly addressed the “UMED” program which is a program for pre-medicine majors. The advisor (Flo) addressed questions regarding this special program and program requirement.

The second section of the checklist is called Providing Information (PI). After revising the checklist to accurately reflect the items on Part II of the AAI, the PI section was deleted and a new section Academic Majors and Courses (AMC) was added. The advisors touched on five of the six AMC items: declaring a major, content of courses, other campus offices, possible majors,

and degree or major requirements. Advisors discussed the importance of declaring a major and they and the students indicated that they had changed their majors. One student (Kila) was uncertain of changing majors and the advisor (Flo) discussed her interest, yet hesitation in changing majors. She and Flo discussed the student “talking it over with your [Kila’s] Mom to help you [her] decide.”

Both advisors and students talked about the content of specific courses especially in psychology and English courses. Both advisors talked generally about other campus offices and specifically instructed students to remain in contact with instructors and the financial aid office in order to ensure their funding was approved and processed.

Possible majors were discussed concerning a student considering changing her major. The advisors also explored volunteering as a degree or major requirement for some majors. Flo announced that “some majors require conference volunteering as part of their program...whether they do or don’t, it would be a great experience...and help your resume look good.”

On the Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR) section of the checklist, I observed the advisors and students discussing 10 of the 12 items. The 10 discussed items include: internships or cooperative education, personal values, important social or political issues, personal concerns or problems, evaluating academic progress, getting to know each other, extracurricular activities, experiences in different classes, current involvement outside the classroom, and setting personal goals. Regarding internships and cooperative education, advisors discussed a particular student’s experience working at the Consulate, how or if that could be counted as course credit and obtaining a stipend to do the Consulate internship.

One student expressed her personal value of not “going to class on [her] birthday.” Women and Diversity conference, Women Against Violence conference, Vietnamese New Year, importance of volunteer work were all important social or political issues that were discussed.

Flo and her two groups of students discussed a politically relevant author and activist of Sociology who would be going to MU for a conference in the city. Flo explained that the author was well-known for her work regarding women of color. She encouraged them to look up the author on the web to find out additional information on the speaker. The personal concerns that were addressed were students' struggles with work and school, academic anxieties, worry about changing major, and taking advantage of upcoming semester breaks. Advisors and students evaluated students' academic progress by students identifying classes that they anticipate problems in and discussing their progress in all classes thus far. After identifying the course or courses that students anticipated having problems with, advisors asked students to write down those course(s) and their goals for the course and how they planned on achieving those goals. For example, Ben stated that he expects to have problems with mathematics, but he planned on "going to the teacher in math if I have problems...plus I have a new attitude toward math now – just that's helping me do better." Advisors had students introduce themselves to the other students and citing their names and majors as a way of advisors and students getting to know each other and getting the students to know each other as well. Extracurricular activities and current involvement outside the classroom were addressed by the advisors giving students information regarding a planning meeting, cultural events, and other organizations that students were encouraged to join to become more involved in campus life. Tonie held up a flyer and said, "Student organizations – this is a student organization flyer, if you're interested in joining or helping." Experiences in different classes were discussed as students expressed their concerns in certain classes, difficulty level of certain classes, "good" and "bad" teachers, and experiences with different instructors at MU. Finally, students were encouraged to set goals and most students set goals as pertaining to a particular course like mathematics, biology and sociology

classes. Other goals students set were related to a specific grade point average and specifically “having a new attitude toward math.”

The fourth section of the checklist is Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS). It consists of four items; however, no topics or items were addressed during the advising sessions at the MU SSS program.

The last section of the checklist is Teaching Personal Skills (TPS). Advisors and students addressed all three items in this section: college policies, study skills and tips, and time management. College policies included information and details regarding grade suspension, college credit information on internships, and calculating grade point averages. This information was presented in a teaching fashion. Not only did the two advisors explain the information to the students, but they also taught the skills to them. The advisors and students also discussed students’ opinions of the grade suspension policy. For example, one student (Janice) expressed her disappointment of the policy with her advisor (Tonie) and the group of other students. Janice expressed, “It’s not fair that it’s only for freshman and sophomores... it’s not fair that I can’t do a grade suspension just because I’m a senior.” Both advisors and students suggested study skills and tips to aid in academic success including: talking to instructors, asking questions about missed or unclear information, tape recording lecture, signing up for tutoring and/or supplemental instruction, studying with a classmate, and studying before and after class meetings. Time management topics revolved mostly around how students would prepare for the semester breaks, how to plan ahead for exams, and how to plan a work schedule around tutoring and classes.

Regarding the nature of the advising relationship, I observed the advisors’ personal concern for the students, which was revealed in their concern for students’ academic success. Also, the advisors seemed to be familiar with the students and on some occasions asked specific

questions that revolved around a particular student's history. There was closeness between the advisors and students that was revealed in the way they interacted with each other. Advisors and students used humor with each other; there was eye contact and advisors seemed to be familiar with each student's academic and personal "history" that prompted questions relating to that history. For instance, Flo (advisor) asked John (student) "I know you've had some trouble with math in the past, so... what's your plan for math this semester?" The environment was somewhat informal, yet there was a sense that students and advisors knew where the boundaries were for the relationship. One advisor (Tonie) expressed her concern for two new SSS program students (Kiki and Syd) and wanted to ensure that they understood Tonie's role by inviting them to report in as often as needed. Tonie encouraged Kiki and Syd to sign up for more appointments as often as they wanted and for them to "use me [her] as a resource...that's why I'm here – to help." Both advisors seemed to inform or refer the students, but left the final decision making to the student. For example, the advisors give the students information regarding the benefits of enrolling in tutoring and volunteering for conferences and gives them specifics on when, where, and how to sign up for tutoring and conferences, but leave the decisions regarding acting on the information ultimately to the student. The overall nature of the relationship between advisors and students was developmental because of the personal attention given to the students. Advisors presented information and extended encouragement but students were ultimately responsible for the final decision-making.

Research Question Two – MU

Research question two asks, "What are SSS advisors' perceptions of how they advise SSS students?" To answer this question, I employed a quantitative methodology, which consisted of descriptive statistics from Part I of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). Sums and means were used to determine the overall scoring of the 14 items of

Part I of the AAI to determine the developmental and prescriptive advising continuum (DPA scale) and to determine the developmental or prescriptive nature of the DPA subscales. It should be noted that the original instructions for the AAI asked for responses regarding academic advising for the whole year. I revised the directions to instruct the participants to respond to the AAI for the *current session only*. Before giving the AAI to each participant, I verbally reiterated the change to ensure that they scored the survey for the current session. High scores for the DPA scale (57 – 112) indicated that developmental advising was prevalent during advising sessions. Low scores (14 – 56) indicated that prescriptive advising was prevalent during advising sessions. Both Student Support Services advisors at Metropolitan University scored themselves to be developmental. The mean score for the two advisors for the DPA scale was 101.5.

Three subscales were also examined: Personalizing Education (PE), Academic Decision-Making (ADM), and Selecting Courses (SC). The PE subscale consisted of eight items (AAI items 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13). High scores for the PE subscale (33 – 64) indicated developmental advising, and low scores for the PE subscale (8 – 32) indicated prescriptive advising. The mean score for the PE subscale was 60.5, which points to developmental advising.

The ADM subscale includes four items (AAI items 6, 7, 11, 14). High scores for the ADM subscale (17 – 32) represented developmental advising, and low scores for the ADM subscale (4 – 16) represented prescriptive advising. The mean score for the ADM subscale was 25.5, which verified developmental advising.

The SC subscale consists of two items (AAI items 2, 12). High scores for the SC subscale (9 – 16) reflected developmental advising; low scores for the SC subscale (2 – 8) reflected prescriptive advising. The mean score for the SC subscale was 15.5, which represented developmental advising. Summaries of advisors' perception scores are in the table below (Table 3).

Table 3

MU Advisor Perception Scores of Advising Styles

Scale and subscales from AAI	<u>MU Advisor Perception</u>	
Part I	M	SD
DPA (Developmental=57-112)	101.5	6.36
PE (Developmental=33-64)	60.5	4.95
ADM (Developmental=17-32)	25.5	.71
SC (Developmental=9-16)	15.5	.71

These scores all verify the advisors' perceptions of their advising behaviors as being developmental. They were especially developmental since all scores were on the high end of the scale and subscale range. As indicated in the table below (Table 4), all of the MU advisors' perception scores were higher than the range midpoint of the DPA scale and each subscale. The range midpoint is the median score, and in this case is the average score as well, of the range of each scale and subscale. For example, the possible range for the subscale, Personalizing Education (PE), is 33-64. The range midpoint of this range is arrived by adding 33 and 64 (equaling 97) then is divided by two resulting in an average score of 48.5. All scores represent developmental advising behaviors. The range midpoint was calculated to illustrate whether the advisors scored on the high or low end (above or below the range midpoint) of the developmental range.

Table 4

Comparison of Range Midpoint to Advisor’s Mean Perception Score

Scale and subscales from AAI	Range Midpoint	<u>MU Advisor Perception</u> M
Part I		
DPA (DEV=57-112)	84.5	101.5
PE (DEV=33-64)	48.5	60.5
ADM (DEV=17-32)	24.5	25.5
SC (DEV=9-16)	12.5	15.5

Research Question Three – MU

Research question three asks, “What are SSS students’ perceptions of how they are advised by SSS advisors?” To answer this question, I employed a quantitative methodology, which consisted of descriptive statistics from Part I of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). As previously stated, sums and means were used to determine the overall scoring the 14 items of Part I of the AAI to determine the developmental and prescriptive advising continuum (DPA scale) and to determine the developmental or prescriptive nature of the DPA subscales. Higher scores for the scales indicated that developmental advising was prevalent during advising sessions and lower scores indicated that prescriptive advising was prevalent during advising sessions. Student Support Services students at Metropolitan University scored their advisors’ advising styles to be developmental. The 10 student participants scored the AAI based on their perceptions of their advisors. The mean score of students’ perceptions for the

DPA, PE, ADM and SC scales were 67.2, 33.8, 22.9 and 10.5 respectively, which supports the range of scores of developmental advising. Summaries of students' perception scores of their advisors' advising styles are in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5

MU Student Perception Scores of Advisors' Advising Styles

Scale and subscales from AAI	MU Student Perception	
	M	SD
Part I		
DPA (Developmental=57-112)	67.2	11.83
PE (Developmental=33-64)	33.8	4.89
ADM (Developmental=17-32)	22.9	6.87
SC (Developmental=9-16)	10.5	4.91

These scores all verify the students' perceptions of their advisors' behaviors as being developmental. However, even though all of the scores the students reported fell in the developmental range, the scores were lower than the range midpoint of the DPA and the subscales. As indicated in the table below (Table 6), all of the MU students' perception scores were lower than the range midpoint of the DPA scale and each subscale.

Table 6

Comparison of Range Midpoint to Student's Perception of Advising Styles Score

Scale and subscales from AAI	Range Midpoint	<u>MU Student Perception</u>
		M
Part I		
DPA (DEV=57-112)	84.5	67.2
PE (DEV=33-64)	48.5	33.8
ADM (DEV=17-32)	24.5	22.9
SC (DEV=9-16)	12.5	10.5

Students' perceptions were also broken down by advisor. I observed two advisors at MU. Sum and standard deviation results of students' perceptions of advisors' advising styles are summarized in the table below (Table 7).

Table 7

MU Student Perceptions of Advisors' Advising styles by Advisor

Scale and subscales	<u>MU (all)</u>	<u>MU#1</u>	<u>MU#2</u>
from AAI Part I	M	M	M
DPA (Dev.=57-112)	67.2	75.2	59.2
PE (Dev.=33-64)	33.8	34.8	32.8
ADM (Dev.=17-32)	22.9	26.2	19.6
SC (Dev.=9-16)	10.5	14.2	6.8

Not all mean scores for the second advisor, MU#2, were developmental. The mean scores for PE and SC were not considered developmental, but they were considered to be in the prescriptive range. After averaging both advisors' scores, however, the mean score for MU falls within the developmental range. MU#2 advisor's scores were much lower than MU#1 advisor's scores and lowered the MU total averages.

Research Question Four – MU

Research question four asks, “What are the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type?” To address question four I compared what I observed during advising sessions by using the data from the checklist and from the nature of the advising section to the results from Part II of the AAI survey taken by advisors and students. Specifically, I compared frequency of activity and perception of developmental or prescriptive from the AAI to my data collected during observations. I also compared advisors' answers on the AAI to students' answers. This resulted, more specifically, in comparing the similarities and differences of advisors' and students' perceptions of what occurred during particular advising sessions.

After analyzing the data, I chose to report those consistencies and inconsistencies of frequency of the advising topics, which is Part II of the AAI survey. Students recorded the number of times they perceived that their advisors addressed each topic; the advisors recorded the number of times they perceived that they addressed each topic for the total sessions; as the researcher, I recorded the number of times I perceived each topic was addressed during the sessions. Responses ranged from one to five or more. I focused on those topics that were discussed five or more times.

As the table below (Table 8) illustrates, there are some very obvious consistencies in which all three perceptions (students, advisors, and researcher) agreed that topics were discussed five or more times. The students, advisors, or I (as the researcher) stated that all 30 topics from

the items listed on Part II of the AAI were discussed five or more times. Of the 30 advising topics, the students, advisors, and I agreed that 12 topics were covered during advising sessions five or more times. The advisors and students agreed that four of the 18 remaining topics were discussed; the students, and I agreed that two of the 18 remaining topics were discussed. Of the remaining 12 topics, 11 topics were thought to be discussed five or more times by the students only; one topic was thought to be discussed five or more times by the advisors only.

Table 8

Students', Advisors' and Researcher's Perception of Topics Discussed Five or More Times

Part II of AAI	MU Advisor	MU Student	Researcher
Item/Topic	Perception	Perception	Observation at MU
College policies	X	X	X
Sign registration forms		X	
Drop/add courses		X	
Personal values		X	
Majors/academic concentration	X	X	
Important social/political issues	X	X	X
Course content	X	X	
Selecting courses		X	
Planning a schedule		X	

(Table Continued)

Transfer credit & policies		X		
Advanced placement		X		
Career Alternative		X		
Probation & dismissal policies	X			
Financial aid	X	X		X
Other campus offices that can provide assistance	X	X		
Study skills or tips	X	X		X
Degree or major concentration requirements	X	X		
Personal concerns or problems		X		X
Study abroad or other special programs		X		X
Internship or cooperative education opportunities	X	X		X

(Table Continued)

Talking about or setting goals	X		X	X
Evaluating academic progress	X		X	X
Getting to know each other	X		X	X
Extracurricular activities	X		X	X
Job placement opportunities			X	
Purposes of a college education			X	
Declaring or changing major/concentration			X	
Time management	X		X	X
Experiences in different classes	X		X	X
What student is doing besides taking classes	X		X	X

Note. "X" indicates topic was perceived to be discussed five or more times.

As stated, Table 8 illustrates the consistencies and inconsistencies in which all three perceptions (students, advisors, and researcher) agree that topics were discussed five or more times. The table allows the reader to immediately and visually recognize and identify how and

where the consistencies and inconsistencies exist between advisors, students and my perceptions of advising behavior during advising sessions.

Research Question Five – MU

The last research question asks, “How does perception of advising type affect students’ satisfaction?” As mentioned in Chapter Three, my original plan to address this question was to correlate students’ answers to the AAI on Part I (concerning the developmental and prescriptive continuum) to answers on Part III of the AAI (concerning satisfaction levels of advising services). However, based on a lack of variance and a small sample size, correlation data did not yield notable results. I then decided to calculate mean scores from students’ responses to Part I of the AAI and Part III of the AAI and rank these means. I also analyzed the qualitative data from the open-ended questions from the satisfaction part of the AAI (Part III).

Students ranked their advisors from one to four (one being “strongly disagree” and four being “strongly agree”) on seven satisfaction questions. The mean scores for the satisfaction scale were calculated and compared to each other to create a ranking. Mean scores for the DPA scale and the subscales were calculated and compared to the range midpoint for the DPA and each subscale to create a rank score. A percentage was established by dividing the mean scores for the DPA and the subscales by the range midpoint – only then could the percentages be ranked. The percentages calculated were used only for *ranking* purposes. The percentages have no true value to the study except for converting them to ranks that could then be compared. Other options for the base number used could have been the highest number of each scale range or the lowest number of each scale range. For consistency, I chose to use the range midpoint as the base number in the calculation because it is a number used throughout the study for comparison purposes.

Of the seven satisfaction items, the highest ranked item was that students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. Students rated that item with the highest mean score of four as students “strongly agreed” that they would highly recommend that advisor. There was a three-way tie for the second rank having a mean score of 3.3 out of four: general satisfaction, advisor availability, and overall effectiveness. The two items that tied for the fifth rank – that had a mean rank score of 3.2 out of four – were students receiving accurate information and receiving information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures. The lowest ranked item with a mean rank score of 3.1 was the item relating to sufficient time for advising sessions.

Of the DPA and the three subscales, the Academic Decision Making (ADM) subscale ranked first with 93.5 percent of the range midpoint; Selecting Courses (SC) subscale ranked second with 84.0 percent of the range midpoint; Developmental Prescriptive Advising (DPA) ranked third with 79.5 percent of the range midpoint; Personalizing Education (PE) ranked last with 69.7 percent of the range midpoint. Using the raw score for the scales would give an inaccurate account of the ranks; therefore, the percentages were calculated by using the range midpoint for ranking purposes only. The table below (Table 9) summarizes these rankings.

Table 9

Comparison of Students’ Satisfaction Rankings to Students’ DPA and Subscale Rankings

<u>Satisfaction Items and Ranking</u>		<u>DPA and Subscales Ranking and Items</u>	
Items	Ranking	Ranking	Items
General Satisfaction	2	3	Developmental Prescriptive Advising

(Table Continued)

Accurate Information	5	4	Personalizing Education
Deadline, Policy & Procedure Info	5	1	Academic Decision Making
Advisor Availability	2	2	Selecting Courses
Sufficient time for Advising Session	7		
Overall Effectiveness	2		
Advisor Highly Recommended	1		

The table above (Table 9) allows one to discern the highest and lowest student rankings from the satisfaction items and from the DPA scale and subscales. This provides a better visual illustration of those items students perceived more satisfactorily than others and those items they perceived to be more developmental than others are. Therefore, the table enables one to quickly observe and compare the highest and lowest rankings from the satisfaction items and from the DPA scale and subscales.

The highest student satisfaction ranking was that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students and the highest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with academic decision making. The lowest student satisfaction ranking was the item related to having sufficient time for advising sessions and the lowest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with personalizing education.

Two open-ended questions were added to the survey regarding students' satisfaction with advisors. The two questions were, "How has this advisor has an impact on you personally?" and

“How has this advisor has an impact on your academic work?” Three students did not respond to the two questions. The remaining seven students all wrote positive responses to the two questions. Themes that rose from the qualitative data included helping and listening. Students reported that the advisors helped them to become more involved, helped with academic matters and helped with exploring different majors. Specifically, some students stated that their advisor, “Helped me and was very open,” “Helped me to become more social,” “Helped me find a major that I would be comfortable with.” The second theme that came from students’ answers to the first question was listening. Students reported that they felt that they could go to their advisors to find someone who cared enough to listen to them. Specifically, students stated that their advisors were people “who cares and she’s someone I can talk to,” “who listened to me and helped with relieving stress,” “who listens and has suggestions.”

The seven students, who chose to respond to the open-ended questions, also had positive advisor remarks regarding the second question dealing with how the advisor had impacted students’ academic work. Two themes emerged from the second question were motivation and information. Students reported that advisors helped keep students academically motivated through difficult times. They reported that advisors helped students with “motivation,” helped me realize that hard work pays off,” and she “pushes me to set goals.” The second theme revolved around information. Students reported that their advisors’ knowledge and dissemination of information helped students academically. Students stated that advisors helped “plan classes and use time wisely,” “by giving information on deadlines,” and “by giving me study tips and informing me of time management.”

Case Study of Southern Community College

Southern Community College (SCC) is a public, two-year institution located in an urban city in Louisiana. SCC is considered to have one of the lowest admissions policies in the state of

Louisiana. Observations of the Student Support Services (SSS) program at SCC occurred during the end of February 2005, which was five weeks after the semester began and one week before mid-semester.

The SSS program office is located in one of the primary buildings devoted to student services. Financial Aid, Admissions, Testing, the Registrar, the Bursar, Advising, Career Counseling, Accounts Receivable, Tech Prep, and Veteran's Upward Bound are some of the other offices that are located in this building. There are also some classes held in the building. The Student Services Building is located on the north end of the SCC campus. Because of the location, students would have to make a special trip to the Student Services Building unless they had other business in that building; however, the fact that the SSS program is located with all of the other student service offices is beneficial especially when problems arise specific to the services provided in the building. The close proximity to these other offices helps to get problems easily resolved. I had some difficulty finding the office because the room numbers were incorrect, but after asking around I found the program office. The office is set up with a clerical person and with a suite of offices for the SSS program only. There are two advisor offices and the director's office located within the suite. Upon entering the SSS program, students checked in with the secretary behind a counter and the secretary notified the particular advisor of their arrival.

SCC's SSS program usually has two advisors on staff, but there was only one advisor employed at the time of my observation. Both advisor offices were supplied with computers, printers, and storage space. Both offices were roomy and well kept. The advisor I observed, Jess, had an organized and well ordered desk. There was nothing hanging on the walls and there were two chairs opposite the desk from the advisor for students to sit.

Research Question One – SCC

I utilized observations to answer research question one which asks: “To what extent and in what ways do Student Support Services (SSS) advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students?” I observed one advisor and five different students at the SCC SSS program. The advisor who participated in this study was Jess and the five students who agreed to participate in this study were Betty, Jill, Yuri, Brigid, and Louise. Jess was a white female advisor. All five women students categorized themselves as African American and all five women were verified as being low income and first-generation students. Betty, a senior, was 31 or older; Jill and Yuri, both sophomores, were both between the ages of 25 and 30; Brigid, a sophomore, was 31 or older; Louise, a sophomore, was 21 years of age.

In the first section of the checklist, Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP), one of the five topics was discussed. The only EIP topic covered included financial aid. Financial aid information including informing students about financial aid appeal procedure, financial aid deadlines, application process, and information regarding federal work-study were all discussed by the advisor.

Half of the six items on the Academic Majors and Courses (AMC) section of the checklist were addressed. The advisor referred students to other campus offices such as the financial aid office and academic departments. Possible majors (i.e. office information systems and allied health majors) were discussed with one student. Degree or major requirements information was discussed concerning the application process and deadline for entry into a program, program prerequisites of certain courses, and advisor and student working on program application together.

Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR) is the third section of the checklist. Six of the 12 items were addressed including: job placement opportunities, personal

concerns or problems, evaluating academic progress, extracurricular activities, experiences in different classes, and current involvement outside the classroom. The advisor and student discussed possible employment and the advisor informed student of an upcoming career fair that could help her acquire employment or at least allow the student to realize the different options she has in her field. The advisor referred students to the career fair to be held on their campus. The personal concerns or problems that were addressed at the SCC SSS program were concerns regarding uncertainty and anxiety of being accepted into an allied health science, clinical program. Evaluation of academic progress included the advisor and students discussing students' grades in courses and students' involvement with tutoring services. The advisor explored information with students regarding special seminars, cultural activities, and a March of Dimes fundraiser when addressing the topics of extracurricular activities and current involvement outside the classroom. Mainly, the advisor discussed only one course with one student in detail – mathematics.

The advisor and students discussed two of the four topics in section four, Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS). Both selecting courses for next term and planning class schedule for next terms were reviewed regarding students' interest in summer school, summer school information including length of class periods and length of session, and possible courses for summer and the fall semesters.

Finally, two of the three topics were addressed in Teaching Personal Skills (TPS) sections, which were college policies and study skills and tips. In this case, a wide range of information regarding college policies was addressed depending on individual students' needs. Types of college policies discussed were information regarding: identification cards, early registration, deadline to withdraw or resign from classes, application and entrance to particular clinical programs, immunization procedure, graduation process, and academic transcripts. The

advisor suggested and recommended that students enroll in tutoring services, tutoring labs, and study skills seminars, and the advisor gave information on how to enroll in these services.

In relation to the nature of the advising relationship, the advisor personalized the advising sessions by showing personal concern toward students' academic and financial aid matters, toward students meeting graduation requirements and toward students' application and admission to clinical programs. There seemed to be a high level of familiarity between the advisor and the students. The advisor addressed the students by name, held direct eye contact, and, at one point, the advisor asked addressed one student's past personal situation and asked whether or not it had gotten resolved. The advisor used some humor with students, but the session was not overly informal. The students had the ultimate responsibility of making and carrying out decisions. The advisor gave information and suggestions regarding summer school, financial aid, program applications, graduation requirements, tutoring, academic deadlines, and potential future coursework; however, it was the students' responsibility to make the final decisions on these topics and to initiate and carry out those decisions. Concerning the topic selecting courses, the advisor and students worked together. Both contributed to the conversation that led to the advantages and disadvantages for enrolling in the summer session and the pros and cons on taking certain classes. The nature of the relationship was developmental in the sense that there was a personal touch during the advising sessions, students held the responsibility of making and carry out decisions, and courses were selected with the assistance – not the insistence – of the advisor.

Research Question Two – SCC

Research question two asks, “What are SSS advisors' perceptions of how they advise SSS students?” To answer this question for the Student Support Services (SSS) program at Southern Community College (SCC), I employed a quantitative methodology, which consisted

of descriptive statistics from Part I of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). As previously stated, sums and means were used to determine the overall scoring of the 14 items of Part I of the AAI to determine the developmental and prescriptive advising continuum and to determine the developmental or prescriptive nature of the DPA subscales. Higher scores for each scale indicated that developmental advising was prevalent during advising sessions, and lower scores for each scale indicated that prescriptive advising was prevalent during advising sessions. The SSS advisor at SCC scored her advising style as being developmental. The sum score for the advisor for the DPA, PE, ADM and SC scales were 99.0, 58.0, 25.0 and 16.0 respectively, which reflected prescriptive advising. These scores all indicate the advisors' perceptions of their advising behaviors as being developmental especially since all scores were on the high end of the range. Summaries of the SCC advisor's perception score is provided in the table below (Table 10).

Table 10

SCC Advisor Perception Mean Scores of Advising Styles

Scale and subscales from AAI	<u>SCC Advisor Perception</u>	
	M	SD
Part I		
DPA (Developmental=57-112)	99.0	-
PE (Developmental=33-64)	58.0	-
ADM (Developmental=17-32)	25.0	-
SC (Developmental=9-16)	16.0	-

Note. No standard deviations are listed because there was only one advisor responding to the survey.

These scores all verify the advisor’s perceptions of her advising behaviors as being developmental. They were especially developmental since all scores were on the high end of the scale and subscale ranges. As indicated in the Table 11, the SCC advisor’s perception scores were higher than the range midpoint of the DPA scale and each subscale. As noted, the range midpoint is the median score, as well as the average score, of the range of each scale and subscale. All scores represented developmental advising behaviors. The range midpoint was calculated to illustrate whether the advisors scored on the high or low end (above or below the range midpoint) of the developmental range.

Table 11

Comparison of Range Midpoint to Advisor’s Mean Perception Score

Scale and subscales from AAI	Range Midpoint	<u>SCC Advisor Perception</u> M
Part I		
DPA (DEV=57-112)	84.5	99.0
PE (DEV=33-64)	48.5	58.0
ADM (DEV=17-32)	24.5	25.0
SC (DEV=9-16)	12.5	16.0

Research Question Three – SCC

Research question three asks, “What are SSS students’ perceptions of how they are advised by SSS advisors?” To answer this question, I employed a quantitative methodology, which consisted of descriptive statistics from Part I of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). As stated, sums and means were used to determine the overall scoring the 14

items of Part I of the AAI to determine the developmental and prescriptive advising continuum and to determine the developmental or prescriptive nature of the DPA subscales. Higher scores for the scales indicated that developmental advising was prevalent during advising sessions, and lower scores indicated that prescriptive advising was prevalent during advising sessions. Student Support Services students at Southern Community College (SCC) scored their advisor’s advising style to be developmental. The five student participants scored the AAI based on their perceptions of the advisor. The mean score of students’ perceptions for the DPA, PE, ADM and SC scales were 63.8, 34.7, 17.2 and 11.8 respectively, which verifies developmental advising. Summaries of SCC students’ perception scores of their advisor’s advising behaviors are below in Table 12.

Table 12

SCC Student Perception Scores of Advisor’s Advising Style

<u>SCC Student Perception</u>		
Scale and subscales from AAI	M	SD
Part I		
DPA (Developmental=57-112)	63.8	15.53
PE (Developmental=33-64)	33.7	6.14
ADM (Developmental=17-32)	17.2	7.56
SC (Developmental=9-16)	11.8	5.72

These scores all verify the students’ perceptions of their advisors’ behaviors as being developmental. However, the standard deviations were large possibly indicating borderline developmental behaviors. Moreover, even though all of the scores the students reported fell in

the developmental range, the scores were lower than the range midpoint of the DPA and the subscales. As indicated in the (Table 13), all of the SCC students' perception scores were lower than the range midpoint of the DPA scale each subscale.

Table 13

Comparison of Range Midpoint to Students' Perception of Advising Style Score

Scale and subscales from AAI	Range Midpoint	<u>SCC Students' Perception</u> M
Part I		
DPA (DEV=57-112)	84.5	63.8
PE (DEV=33-64)	48.5	34.7
ADM (DEV=17-32)	24.5	17.2
SC (DEV=9-16)	12.5	11.8

Research Question Four – SCC

Research question four asks, “What are the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type?” To address question four I compared what I observed during advising sessions by using the data from the checklist and from the nature of advising section to the results from Part II of the AAI survey taken by advisors and students. Specifically, I compared frequency of activity and perception of developmental or prescriptive from the AAI to my data collected during observations. I also compared advisors' answers on the AAI to students' answers. This resulted, more specifically, in concluding the similarities and differences of advisors' and students' perceptions of what occurred during particular advising sessions.

As stated earlier, after analyzing the data, I chose to report those regularities and irregularities of frequency of the advising topics, which is Part II of the AAI survey. Just as at MU, SCC students recorded the number of times they perceived their advisor addressed each topic; the SCC advisor recorded the number of times they perceived that she addressed each topic for the total sessions; as the researcher, I recorded the number of times I perceived each topic addressed during the sessions. Responses ranged from one to five or more. I focused on those topics that were discussed five or more times.

As the table (Table 14) illustrates, there are some very obvious constancies in which all three perceptions (student, advisor, and researcher) agreed that topics were discussed five or more times. Specifically, of the 30 topics from the items listed on Part II of the AAI, the students, advisor or I (as the researcher) mentioned 28 items. The students, advisor and I agreed that only three topics were covered during advising sessions five or more times. The advisor and students agreed that three of the 25 remaining topics were discussed five or more times; the students and researcher agreed that two of the 25 remaining topics were discussed five or more times. Of the remaining 20 topics, 17 topics were thought to be discussed five or more times by the students only; only one topic was thought to be discussed five or more times by the advisor only; two topics were thought to be discussed five or more times by me (the researcher) only.

Table 14

Students', Advisors' and Researcher's Perception of Topics Discussed Five or More Times

Part II of AAI	SCC Advisor	SCC Student	Researcher
Item/Topic	Perception	Perception	Observation
College policies			X
Sign registration forms	X	X	
Drop/add courses	X	X	
Personal values	X		
Majors/academic concentration	X	X	
Important social/political issues			
Course content		X	
Selecting courses		X	
Planning a schedule		X	
Transfer credit & policies		X	
Advanced placement		X	
Career Alternative		X	

(Table Continued)

Probation & dismissal policies				
Financial aid		X		X
Other campus offices that can provide assistance		X		
Study skills or tips	X	X		X
Degree or major concentration requirements	X	X		X
Personal concerns or problems		X		X
Study abroad or other special programs		X		
Internship or cooperative education opportunities		X		
Talking about or setting goals		X		
Evaluating academic progress	X	X		X

(Table Continued)

Getting to know each other	X	
Extracurricular activities		X
Job placement opportunities	X	
Purposes of a college education	X	
Declaring or changing major/concentration	X	
Time management	X	
Experiences in different classes	X	
What student is doing besides taking classes	X	

Note. “X” indicates topic was perceived to be discussed five or more times.

As stated previously, Table 14 illustrates the similarities and discrepancies in which all three perceptions (students, advisors, and researcher) agree that topics were discussed five or more times. The table allows the reader to visualize how and where the consistencies and inconsistencies exist between advisors, students and my perceptions of advising behavior during advising sessions.

Research Question Five – SCC

The last research question asks, “How does perception of advising type affect students’ satisfaction?” As mentioned in Chapter Three, I chose to calculate mean scores from students’

responses to Part I of the AAI and Part III of the AAI, rank these means. I compared the ranked mean scores of the developmental scale and subscales on the AAI (Part I) to the ranked scores of the satisfaction questions (AAI Part III).

Students ranked their advisors from one to four (one being “strongly disagree” and four being “strongly agree”) on seven satisfaction questions. The mean scores for the satisfaction scale were calculated and compared to each other to create a ranking. Mean scores for the DPA scale and the subscales were calculated and compared to the range midpoint for the DPA and each subscale to create a rank score. A percentage was established by dividing the mean scores for the DPA and the subscales by the range midpoint – only then could the percentages be ranked. The range midpoint was used as the base since it is a constant number used as a comparison number throughout the data analysis.

Of the seven satisfaction items, six tied for the rank score of one. Those six items that earned the highest score of four as students “strongly agreed” with the following: general satisfaction; advisors providing accurate information; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; advisors being available to students; overall effectiveness of advisors; and the that student would highly recommend this advisor to other students. The seventh item, pertaining to having sufficient time for advising sessions, then ranked as seventh.

Of the DPA and the three subscales, the Selecting Courses (SC) subscale ranked first with 94.4 percent of the range midpoint; Developmental Prescriptive Advising scale (DPA) ranked second with 75.5 percent of the range midpoint; the Personalizing Education (PE) subscale ranked third with 71.8 percent of the range midpoint; Academic Decision Making (ADM) subscale ranked last with 70.2 percent of the range midpoint. The table below (Table 15) summarizes these rankings.

Table 15

Comparison of Students' Satisfaction Rankings to Students' DPA and Subscale Rankings

<u>Satisfaction Items and Ranking</u>		<u>DPA and Subscales Ranking and Items</u>	
Item	Ranking	Ranking	Items
General Satisfaction	1	2	Developmental Prescriptive Advising
Accurate Information	1	3	Personalizing Education
Deadline, Policy & Procedure Info	1	4	Academic Decision Making
Advisor Availability	1	1	Selecting Courses
Sufficient time for Advising Session	7		
Overall Effectiveness	1		
Advisor Highly Recommended	1		

The table above (Table 9) allows one to discern the highest and lowest student rankings from the satisfaction items and from the DPA scale and subscales. This allows a better visual illustration of those items students perceived more satisfactorily than others and which items they perceived to be more developmental than others are. Therefore, the table enables one to quickly observe and compare the highest and lowest rankings from the satisfaction items and from the DPA scale and subscales.

Six items tied for the highest student satisfaction ranking. They were: general satisfaction; advisors providing accurate information; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; advisors being available to students; overall effectiveness of advisors; and that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. The highest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with selection courses. The lowest student satisfaction ranking was the item related to having sufficient time for advising sessions and the lowest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with academic decision making.

Two open-ended questions were added to the survey regarding students' satisfaction with advisors. The two questions were "How has this advisor has an impact on you personally?" and "How has this advisor has an impact on your academic work?" All five students responded in some way to each of the two questions. The main theme that came out of the qualitative data was advisor availability. Students reported the importance of knowing that there was somewhere they could go for "anything." Students stated, "my advisor always has an open ear. She always welcomes you to stop by her office," "she is there when I need anything," "she checks and makes sure everything is okay."

Two themes emerged from the second open-ended question responses – information and goal setting. Students praised their advisor for the important information she gives to students. Students stated that "she helps me make positive choices in my classes," she gives me all the information I need to have a successful school session," "she makes sure I know where I can go to get help (tutoring)," and " she helped me get a tutor." Goal setting was the second theme that was revealed through the data. Students positively reported that their advisor expressed concern for students and discussed goals for that semester. Students reported that the advisor "helped build up myself up by helping me set my goals," and "expressed her concern when I told her I

wanted to take six classes...after I told her I thought I could handle it, she said ‘I know you can do it, too.’”

Case Study of University of State

University of State (US) is a public, four-year institution located in an urban city in Louisiana. US is considered to have one of the highest admissions standards of all of the public universities in the state. Observations of the Student Support Services (SSS) program at US occurred on two separate occasions during the middle and end of March. Observations occurred after mid-semester and four and five weeks prior to the end of the semester.

The SSS program office is located in the same building as the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, the General College, and the ID card Office. Classrooms are also located in this building. The SSS office is housed with another advising center designated for Freshmen and Sophomores. Upon entering the suite, one saw many clerical and student workers manning the front desk with cubicles/work areas also behind the front desk. Students are directed to sign in the computer system to alert appropriate advisors of the student’s arrival. There are two SSS advisors’ offices, one director’s office and one assistant director’s office located in the suite along with four other US University College advisors’ offices. There are signs posted for students explaining that the suite houses the SSS program and the US University College advisors to distinguish any student confusion. The SSS program office was easy to find and located in a central and convenient site on the campus. It was convenient because the building is located in the quadrangle which is next to the US library – a high traffic, student area.

The two advisors had spacious offices and were each supplied with a computer, laptop computer, and printer/copier. Both advisors had a bulletin board with different important events, dates, and deadlines for students to view. Both advisors had personal pictures displayed of their

family and friends, which could help students see the advisors in a more personal or human level. Both advisors had organized and clean workspaces.

Research Question One – US

I utilized observations to answer research question one which asks “To what extent and in what ways do Student Support Services (SSS) advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students?” Just as I observed two advisors and 10 students from MU, so did I observe two advisors and 10 students at US; however, instead of group sessions (MU), I observed 10 individual advising sessions at the US SSS program with two different advisors. Basically, the same procedure was used for all SSS programs with the exception of recording information on one “group sheet” as done at MU. Because all of the sessions at SCC and US were individual advising sessions, I logged the information on separate sheets for each student.

The two advisors I observed, Fred and Sheila, from MU were both white – one male and one female. The five students I observed with Fred were Niki, Lanie, Mickey, Dottie and Maggie. The five students I observed with Sheila were Tiffany, Amy, Jack, Kala, and Tate. The 10 students shared three different ethnicities and represented freshman through senior status. Dottie (22 year old sophomore) and Maggie (18 year old freshman) both identified themselves as female, Hispanic American students. Mickey (21 year old junior), Tiffany (19 year old sophomore), and Amy (20 year old junior) were all female, African American students. I observed only two male students who both categorized themselves as White were 22 year old senior, Jack, and 19 year old freshman, Tate. Kala (23 year old senior), Niki (20 year old sophomore) and Lanie (18 year old freshman) were all white female students. Seven of the 10 students were verified as both low-income and first-generation students; three of the 10 students were verified as being first-generation students only.

As I observed each session at US, I recorded the activities and topics discussed during the sessions on the revised checklist and on the nature of the advising relationship sheet (Appendix D) that correspond to the activities and topics relayed on the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). I recorded the information that was addressed during the 10 individual sessions. Ten separate sheets were used to record specific information for each of the students. I coded each checklist and inventory for all students to ensure that the information for each student was kept together.

After the observations, I transcribed the sessions from the tape recordings. As I listened to and transcribed the recordings, I reassessed and revised the original information I logged on the checklist and the information I wrote on the nature of the advising relationship. I, then, assessed whether the topics and activities yielded developmental or prescriptive advising based on developmental and prescriptive theory. I concluded that even though both types of advising were employed, the overall tendency and quality of the sessions, topics and activities discussed, and the nature of the advising relationship all reflected developmental advising styles.

Both University of State (US) advisors covered much of the same information with each student. For the first section, Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP), both advisors discussed four out of the five topics including transfer credits, advance placement or exempting courses, probation or dismissal, and financial aid. Transfer credit topic revolved around the restriction of transfer credits from a community college to US, courses transferring from one curriculum to another, and information regarding US courses as they transfer to an out-of-state, private university. Advance placement or exempting courses was discussed with a student who had “tested out” of eight hours of Spanish. One advisor discussed probation or dismissal information with a student who was trying to “get off” probation and the advisor and student discussed the

grade point average student would need to get to accomplish getting back to a good academic standing status.

The second section of the checklist is called Academic Majors and Courses (AMC). In the AMC section of the checklist, all six topics were explored which included declaring a major, content of courses, other campus offices, possible majors, career alternative, and degree or major requirements.

One student was considering double majoring when declaring a major was discussed. The advisors and students discussed subject matter and topics in several courses (such as history, psychology, and archeology) as well as discussing prerequisites and descriptions of courses. Advisors checked with students to distinguish if the students were taking advantage of campus services. Advisors also referred students to other campus offices like students' college or department, tutoring office for review sessions, computer labs, and the career center for additional relevant information. Types of possible majors topics were exploring ways a student could narrow down a major and exploring a student's interest in possibly changing majors to a different major. Advisors addressed possible majors with students, provided information regarding a standardized test to help students with career choice, and referred students to the career center to make an appointment to take the test. Career alternatives were discussed briefly by an advisor and student by discussing the student's interest in a career in forensics. Degree or major requirements were discussed in length including the following topics: information on a "new class," classes that are required in the major, class descriptions, prerequisite courses, limits on certain types of classes, declaring a minor, and applying to get into a major academic college.

Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR) is the third section of the checklist. The advisors at US discussed all but two of the 12 items – internships or cooperative education and the purpose of a college education. One advisor discussed job placement

opportunities with a student to offer possible opportunities for her employment in the future. A student who wanted to raise her grade point average briefly addressed personal values. One advisor addressed important social or political issues by discussing the relevance and importance of history to the world today. Personal concerns or problems were addressed by both advisors and included concern for a student with a hurt leg and the difficulty of “getting around campus” with crutches, anxieties over work and class schedules, concern about changing major as a junior, troubled about choosing the “right” career, concern about not getting into an elite private school and not being able to afford the school if she does get accepted. Advisors evaluated academic progress of students by calculating mid-semester grades and cumulative grades, working with students’ degree audits, and analyzing classes completed and classes still needed for the degree. Advisors tried to get to know the students by using some humor, introducing themselves (if they had never met) and building rapport by asking questions like “How are you enjoying classes?” Extracurricular activities and students’ current involvement outside the classroom included one student’s commitment as an athletic manager (which involves attending all football practices) and another student’s plan to spend the summer in France. Experiences in different classes were explored including the advisors and students: going over grades and quizzes, discussing French class, conferring on tests and make-up policies, discussing student’s dislike of “boring” class, and exploring “hard” classes. Finally, the goals students set when setting personal goals were actually academically focused including students’ desire to raise grade point average and students setting semester and cumulative grade point average goals.

Advisors and students at US discussed all four Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS) topics. Topics discussed regarding dropping or adding courses included the drop deadline and reasons for dropping courses. Advisors signed registration forms and gave students a copy of the form in order for the students to select times on their own. Selecting courses for next term and

planning class schedule for next term topics and activities included the advisors and students working together to narrow down classes for the next term by using the degree audit for each student. Students and advisors also discussed classes that would go toward two majors.

For the last section of the checklist, Teaching Personal Skills (TPS), two of the three activities were addressed. Advisors and students addressed study skills and study tips by discussing the availability of tutoring services and signing up for tutoring. The other topic addressed was college policies. Advisors talked with students about college policies including the deadline date to drop classes or resign from the University, final exam schedule, priority registration dates, how to register, registration account, and policies on retaking classes.

Regarding the nature of the advising relationship, advisors seemed to personalize the sessions by expressing personal concern for students. They did this by using some humor, being complimentary of grades, expressing concern for injured student, expressing concern for student on probation, ignoring the ringing telephone and giving undivided attention to students, showing interest in student's new job, showing excitement for student who was going to France, using eye contact, displaying upbeat and friendly disposition. Also, the advisors extended their services to students and frequently asked, "Can I help you with anything else?"

Decisions were typically made and carried out by students. Advisors and students talked about options and the advisor made recommendations, but the students held the responsibility of carrying out those decisions. For instance, an advisor informed a student of two different curricula, but the student had to make the final decision on what major to follow. The US SSS program was set up a little differently in that the advisors had the computer, mainframe access to drop classes for students and to sign students up for tutoring. After a student decided on an action, the advisor then typically implemented the action in his and her office. In this case, the

advisors carried out some of the students' decisions; however, students held the responsibility of following-up on attending the tutoring sessions.

Advisors and students worked together on selecting courses for the next term. Typically the advisor asked what the students wanted to take and made suggestions based on each student's degree audit and course description; however, the student made the final decision on which courses to take. Both advisors periodically checked with the students to ensure both advisor and student were thinking the same way. A few examples are the advisors asking, "Are you comfortable with those courses?" "Do you follow me?" "What would you like to take?" "Do you have anything in mind?"

The nature of the advising relationship was developmental based on the overall tone of the sessions. Advisors and students held a personal relationship that showed during the sessions by the developmental behavior (i.e. humor, addressing student by name, etc.) displayed by the advisors. Advisors provided information, but final decisions rested on the students' shoulders. Advisors and students worked together while selecting courses. Again, advisors gave suggestions based on students' academic progress, but students made the final selections.

Research Question Two – US

Research question two asks, "What are SSS advisors' perceptions of how they advise SSS students?" To answer this question for the Student Support Services (SSS) program at the University of State (US), I employed a quantitative methodology, which consisted of descriptive statistics from Part I of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). As stated, sums and means were used to determine the overall scoring the 14 items of Part I of the AAI to determine the developmental and prescriptive advising continuum and to determine the developmental or prescriptive nature of the DPA subscales. Higher scores for the DPA scales indicated that developmental advising was prevalent during advising sessions, and lower scores

indicated that prescriptive advising was prevalent during advising sessions. Both US advisors scored their advising styles as being developmental. The mean scores for the advisors for the DPA, PE, ADM and SC scales were 93.0, 48.0, 30.0 and 15.0 respectively, which reflected developmental advising. All of the advisors' perceptions scores fell in the developmental score range indicating their belief of developmental advising behaviors being present. Summaries for US advisors' perceptions of their advising styles are below in Table 16.

Table 16

US Advisors' Perception of Mean Scores of Advising Styles

Scale and subscales from AAI	US Advisor Perception	
	M	SD
Part I		
DPA (Developmental=57-112)	93.0	4.24
PE (Developmental=33-64)	48.0	4.24
ADM (Developmental=17-32)	30.0	0.00
SC (Developmental=9-16)	15.0	0.00

These scores all verify the advisors' perceptions of their advising behaviors as being developmental. They were especially developmental since all scores were on the high end of the scale and subscale range except for the Personalizing Education subscale (PE), which fell right below the midpoint of the developmental range. As indicated in the (Table 17), three out of the four of the US advisors' perception scores were higher than those of the range midpoint of the DPA scale each subscale. Again, as noted, the range midpoint is the median score, as well as the average score, of the range of each scale and subscale. All scores represent developmental

advising behaviors. Again, the range midpoint was calculated to illustrate whether the advisors scored on the high or low end (above or below the range midpoint) of the developmental range.

Table 17

Comparison of Range Midpoint to Advisors' Mean Perception Score

Scale and subscales from AAI	Range Midpoint	<u>US Advisors' Perception</u>
		M
Part I		
DPA (DEV=57-112)	84.5	93.0
PE (DEV=33-64)	48.5	48.0
ADM (DEV=17-32)	24.5	30.0
SC (DEV=9-16)	12.5	15.0

Research Question Three – US

Research question three asks, “What are SSS students’ perceptions of how they are advised by SSS advisors?” To answer this question, I employed a quantitative methodology, which consisted of descriptive statistics from Part I of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) (Appendix B). Sums and means were used to determine the overall scoring the 14 items of Part I of the AAI to determine the developmental and prescriptive advising continuum (DPA scale) and to determine the developmental or prescriptive nature of the DPA subscales. High scores for the scales indicated developmental advising was prevalent during advising sessions, and low scores indicated that prescriptive advising was prevalent during advising sessions. Student Support Services students at University of State (US) scored their advisors’ advising styles to be developmental. The 10 student participants scored the AAI based on their perceptions of their

advisors. The mean score of students' perceptions for the DPA, PE, ADM and SC scales were 81.6, 37.4, 29.9 and 14.3 respectively which indicted developmental advising. The 10 student participants scored the AAI based on their perceptions of their advisors. These scores all indicate the students' perceptions of their advisors' advising behaviors as being developmental. The scores are indicated in the table below (Table 18).

Table 18

US Student Perception Scores of Advisors' Advising Styles

Scale and subscales from AAI	<u>US Student Perception</u>	
	M	SD
Part I		
DPA (Developmental=57-112)	81.6	10.51
PE (Developmental=33-64)	37.4	4.58
ADM (Developmental=17-32)	29.9	3.38
SC (Developmental=9-16)	14.3	3.47

These scores all verify the students' perceptions of their advisors' behaviors as being developmental. However, even though all of the scores the students reported fell in the developmental range, not all were higher than the range midpoint. The DPA scale and one subscale (PE=Personalizing Education) were lower than their respective scores of the range midpoints and the other two subscales (ADM=Academic Decision Making and SC=Selecting Courses) were higher than their respective scores of the range midpoint. As indicated in the (Table 19), two of the US students' perception scores were higher than and two were lower than the range midpoint of the DPA scale each subscale.

Table 19

Comparison of Range Midpoint to Students' Perception of Advising Styles Score

Scale and subscales from AAI	Range Midpoint	<u>US Student Perception</u>
		M
Part I		
DPA (DEV=57-112)	84.5	81.6
PE (DEV=33-64)	48.5	37.4
ADM (DEV=17-32)	24.5	29.9
SC (DEV=9-16)	12.5	14.3

More specifically, students' perceptions were also broken down into advisor. I observed two advisors at US. The sum and standard deviation results of students' perceptions of advisors' advising styles are divided by advisor as indicated in Table 20.

Table 20

US Students' Perception of Advisors' Advising Styles by Advisor

	<u>US (all)</u>	<u>US#1</u>	<u>US#2</u>
Scale and subscales	M	M	M
from AAI Part I			
DPA (Dev.=57-112)	81.6	79.2	84.0
PE (Dev.=33-64)	37.4	37.8	37.0
ADM (Dev.=17-32)	29.9	28.6	31.2
SC (Dev.=9-16)	14.3	12.8	15.8

Research Question Four – US

Research question four asks, “What are the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type?” To address question four I compared what I observed during advising sessions by using the data from the checklist and from the nature of advising section to the results from Part II of the AAI survey taken by advisors and students. Specifically, I compared frequency of activity and perception of developmental or prescriptive from the AAI to my data collected during observations. I also compared advisors’ answers on the AAI to students’ answers. This resulted, more specifically, in concluding the similarities and differences of advisors’ and students’ perceptions of what occurred during particular advising sessions.

After analyzing the data, I chose to report those similarities and discrepancies of frequency of the advising topics (which is Part II of the AAI survey) that occurred five or more times. Again, as previously stated, students, advisors and I all recorded the number of times that the topics were perceived to be addressed and those perceptions were recorded. Responses ranged from one to five or more. I chose to focus on those topics that were discussed five or more times.

As the table below (Table 21) illustrates, there are some very obvious consistencies in which all three perceptions (students, advisors, and researcher) agreed that topics were discussed five or more times. Specifically, of the 30 topics from the items listed on Part II of the AAI, 27 items were mentioned by the students, advisors or me (the researcher). Of the 27 advising topics, the students, advisors and I (as the researcher) agreed that 12 topics were covered during advising sessions five or more times. The advisors and students agreed that nine of the 15 remaining topics were discussed. Of the remaining nine topics, the students and I (as the researcher) concurred on only one topic. One topic was thought to be discussed five or more times by the students only; three topics was thought to be discussed five or more times by the

advisors only; one topic was thought to be discussed five or more times by me only (the researcher).

Table 21

Students', Advisors' and Researcher's Perception of Topics Discussed Five or More Times

Part II of AAI	US Advisor	US Student	Researcher
Item/Topic	Perception	Perception	Observation at US
College policies	X	X	X
Sign registration forms			X
Drop/add courses	X	X	
Personal values	X	X	
Majors/academic concentration	X	X	
Important social/political issues			
Course content	X	X	X
Selecting courses	X	X	X
Planning a schedule	X	X	X
Transfer credit & policies	X	X	
Advanced placement			
Career Alternative		X	

(Table Continued)

Probation & dismissal policies				
Financial aid		X		X
Other campus offices that can provide assistance	X	X		X
Study skills or tips	X	X		X
Degree or major concentration requirements	X	X		X
Personal concerns or problems	X	X		X
Study abroad or other special programs	X	X		
Internship or cooperative education opportunities	X			
Talking about or setting goals	X	X		X
Evaluating academic progress	X	X		X

(Table Continued)

Getting to know each other	X		X	
Extracurricular activities	X		X	
Job placement opportunities	X			
Purposes of a college education	X			
Declaring or changing major/concentration	X		X	
Time management	X		X	
Experiences in different classes	X		X	X
What student is doing besides taking classes	X		X	

Note. “X” indicates topic was perceived to be discussed five or more times.

Table 21 illustrates the consistencies and inconsistencies in which all three perceptions (students, advisors, and researcher) agree that particular topics were discussed five or more times. The table allows the reader to immediately to identify how and where the similarities and differences exist between advisors, students and my perceptions of advising behavior during advising sessions.

Research Question Five – US

The last research question asks, “How does perception of advising type affect students’ satisfaction?” As mentioned in Chapter Three, my original plan to address this question was to

correlate students' answers to the AAI on Part I (concerning the developmental and prescriptive continuum) to answers on Part III of the AAI (concerning satisfaction levels of advising services). However, based on a lack of variance and a small sample size, correlation data did not yield notable results. I then decided to calculate mean scores from students' responses to Part I of the AAI and Part III of the AAI, rank these means and compute a sign test. In other words, I implemented quantitative methods by ranking mean scores of the developmental scale and subscales on the AAI (Part I) to the ranked scores of the satisfaction questions (AAI Part III). I also analyzed the qualitative data from the open-ended questions from the satisfaction part of the AAI (Part III).

Students ranked their advisors from one to four (one being "strongly disagree" and four being "strongly agree") on seven satisfaction questions. The mean scores for the satisfaction scale were calculated and compared to each other to create a ranking. Mean scores for the DPA scale and the subscales were calculated and compared to the range midpoint for the DPA and each subscale to create a rank score. A percentage was established by dividing the mean scores for the DPA and the subscales by the range midpoint – only then could the percentages be ranked. The range midpoint was used as the base since it is a constant number used as a comparison number throughout the data analysis.

Of the seven satisfaction items, there was a five-way tie for the highest rank, which was a 3.9 out of 4, including: general satisfaction; receiving information relating to deadlines, policies, and procedures; sufficient time for advising sessions; overall effectiveness; and students highly recommending the advisors to other students. Students rated the item relating to the advisor giving students accurate information as having a ranking of six out of seven with a rank mean score of 3.8. The lowest ranked item with a mean rank score of 3.7 was the item relating to the availability of advisors for advising students.

Of the DPA and the three subscales, the Academic Decision Making (ADM) subscale ranked first with 122 percent of the range midpoint; Selecting Courses (SC) subscale ranked second with 114 percent of the range midpoint; Developmental Prescriptive Advising (DPA) ranked third with 96.5 percent of the range midpoint; Personalizing Education (PE) ranked last with 77.1 percent of the range midpoint. The table below (Table 22) summarizes these rankings.

Table 22

Comparison of Students' Satisfaction Rankings to Students' DPA and Subscale Ranking

<u>Satisfaction Items and Ranking</u>		<u>DPA and Subscales Ranking and Items</u>	
Item	Ranking	Ranking	Items
General Satisfaction	1	3	Developmental Prescriptive Advising
Accurate Information	6	4	Personalizing Education
Deadline, Policy & Procedure Info	1	1	Academic Decision Making
Advisor Availability	7	2	Selecting Courses
Sufficient time for Advising Session	1		
Overall Effectiveness	1		
Advisor Highly Recommended	1		

The table above (Table 9) allows one to discern the highest and lowest student rankings from the satisfaction items and from the DPA scale and subscales. This allows a better visual illustration of those items students perceived more satisfactorily than others and which items they perceived to be more developmental than others are. Therefore, the table quickly illustrates the highest and lowest rankings from the satisfaction items and from the DPA scale and subscales.

Five items tied for the highest student satisfaction ranking. They were: general satisfaction; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; having sufficient time for advising sessions; overall effectiveness of advisors; and that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. The highest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with academic decision making. The lowest student satisfaction ranking was the item related to the advisor availability and the lowest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with personalizing education.

Two open-ended questions were added to the survey regarding students' satisfaction with advisors. The two questions were "How has this advisor has an impact on you personally?" and "How has this advisor has an impact on your academic work?" All ten students responded in some way to each of the two questions. The students all wrote positive comments regarding the advisors' impact on students personally and academically. Themes that emerged from the qualitative data regarding the first question were interest and information. Students expressed their gratitude toward their advisors because they felt like the advisors really cared about them and because they took an interest in their personal and academic lives. Students stated that their advisor "made me feel comfortable," "makes me feel like I can come to her for questions," "has shown me that there are people (outside of family) interested in things you do," and "shows me and makes me feel like he cares and I can come to get help if I have any trouble."

The second theme that emerged from question one was the theme of providing information. Students reported that the advisors impacted them on a personal level by providing them with academic information. Specifically, they stated that the advisors “informed me of options and deadlines,” and “helped me discover options instead of telling exactly what I need to do.”

Overwhelmingly, the main theme that emerged from the second question was information. Students reported that the information the advisors disseminated to students was the main way that their academic success was positively impacted. Some examples were that students stated that their advisor “lets me know important dates,” “helped me understand the importance of tutoring,” “makes sure to keep me aware of rules and regulations,” “helps me schedule classes,” “helps me see what classes I need to take and keeps me informed of what classes I’ve already taken,” and “gives me advice and information.”

Conclusion

This chapter included a presentation of qualitative and quantitative findings for each research question. The findings were drawn from the previously addressed data analysis. Findings were addressed for each participating institution in a case study format illustrative in narrative and graphic form. In the last chapter, I will discuss the findings and make recommendations for practice and additional research.

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

This chapter begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study and a summary of the results. Recommendations are provided to higher education administrators and advisors as well as to Student Support Services directors and advisors. Finally, suggestions for further research are included.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold: to understand how advisors perceive Student Support Services, to understand how student advisees perceive Student Support Services and to determine, from those responses, to what degree current practice in Student Support Services relates to theories regarding developmental and prescriptive advising. This study presented the views of advisors and students in Student Support Services, with the specific goal of identifying the kind and quality of advising practices employed by SSS advisors in their work with at-risk students. This study also aimed to interpret the perceptions of advisors and at-risk students regarding SSS advising services, and, again, measure the extent to which the services reflected developmental and prescriptive advising theory.

Discussion

In this section, I address the research results as they relate to each research question. Each research question will be restated and the results will be discussed for each of the three institutions pointing out significant results.

Research Question One

Findings from observational data were summarized and analyzed resulting in similarities of and differences between institutional advisors. The table below (Table 23) condenses what I observed during advising sessions for each participating institution and for each item on the

checklist. As noted previously, the checklist parallels Part II of the Academic Advising Inventory.

The table (Table 23) indicates which advisors addressed certain items. There were some similarities and some differences of topics discussed between institutional advisors. Twelve of the 30 items were discussed by at least one advisor from each institution. These items included: financial aid, other campus offices, possible majors, degree or major requirements, personal concerns or problems, evaluating academic progress, getting to know each other, extracurricular activities, experiences in different classes, current involvement outside the classroom, study skills and tips, and college policies. For example, all institutions addressed financial aid topics such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process, scholarship information, financial aid appeal information, and information concerning deadlines.

There were similarities between topics that were discussed by advisors in Metropolitan University (MU) and University of State (US) only. Five of the 30 items were discussed by at least one advisor from MU and from US. These items included: content of courses, declaring major, personal values, important social or political issues, and setting personal goals. For example, MU and US addressed students setting personal goals such as goals pertaining to semester and cumulative grade point averages, goals in particular classes and goals regarding having a “new attitude” in different classes. These items were discussed only by MU and US advisors and were not addressed at all by the advisor from Southern Community College.

Similarities also existed between topics addressed from Southern Community College (SCC) and University of State (US). There were three out of the 30 items that were discussed by at least one advisor from SCC and from US. These items included: job placement opportunities, descriptions to aid in selecting courses while the SCC advisor mostly brainstormed with the students.

Table 23
 Comparison and Summary of Topics Addressed by Institution

	<u>Institutions</u>	
Subscales and Topic Items	Metropolitan	University of State
	University	
Exploring Institutional Policies		
Transfer Credits	Southern Community College	University of State
		Restriction of credits
		Credits from a Community College
		Credits to another university
Advance Placement or Exempting Courses		“Tested out” of 8 hours of Spanish
Probation or Dismissal		Grade point average needed to get off of probation

(Table Continued)

Financial Aid	FAFSA info	Application procedure	Housing
	Stipend	Appeal	State scholarship (TOPS)
	Other funding sources (i.e. scholarships)	Deadlines	Air Force scholarship
	WWW application	Work-study	Other scholarships
Special Academic Programs	UMED program		
Academic Majors & Courses			
Content of Courses	Psychology & English		Archeology, History, &
			Psychology
			Prerequisite courses
			Course description
Declaring a Major	Changing major		Double major

(Table Continued)

Other Campus Offices	Instructor	Allied Health Department	Tutoring
	Financial Aid	Financial Aid	Computer lab
			Academic college &/or department
			Career center
Possible Majors	Explore possible majors	Explore possible majors	Explore possible majors
			Career testing
Career Alternatives			Possible forensics
Degree or Major	Volunteer for conferences	Application deadline	Limit of certain classes
Requirements		Prerequisite courses for program entry	Declaring minor
			Application to major/academic college
			New course offering
			Courses required in major
			Course description
			Prerequisite courses

(Table Continued)

Personal Development &

Interpersonal Relationships

Personal Values	Does not attend classes on her birthday	Grade point average value
Internships or Cooperative Ed.	Stipend Credit for internships	
Job Placement Opportunities		Career fair Possible future employment opportunity
Important Social or Political Issues	Women and Diversity Conference Volunteer Work Vietnamese New Year Women Against Violence	Relevance of History to current events

(Table Continued)

Personal Concerns or Problems	Semester breaks	Entrance to clinical program	Injured leg
	Academic		Desire to change major as a JR
	Work schedule		Work schedule
			Career
			Getting into competitive, private school
			Financial if gets into competitive, private school
Evaluating Academic Progress	Checking classes	Grades	Grades
		Tutoring	Mid-term, semester &
		Checking particular class	cumulative grade point average
			Degree audit
			Courses needed & completed toward degree

(Table Continued)

Getting to Know Each Other	Introducing themselves	Introducing themselves	Introducing themselves
	Informal chit-chat	Informal chit-chat	Informal chit-chat
	Humor	Humor	Humor
	Name & major		
Extracurricular Activities	Planning meeting	Special seminars	Athletic manager
	Cultural events	Cultural activities	
	Other campus organizations		
Purpose of College Education			
Experiences in Different	Classes that concern students	In particular course of concern	Classes that concern students
Classes	“Good & bad” teachers		Quizzes
	Different teachers		Grades
			Hard courses
			Boring courses
			Test & make-up tests

(Table Continued)

Current Involvement Outside the Classroom	Same as Extracurricular Activities	Same as Extracurricular Activities	Same as Extracurricular Activities
Setting Personal Goals	Semester grade point average Math, Biology & Sociology classes “New attitude”	Volunteering for March of Dimes fundraiser	Attending all practices Summer in France Semester & cumulative grade point average Raising grade point average
Registration & Class Scheduling			
Dropping or Adding Courses			Drop deadline Must drop because of work

(Table Continued)

Signing Registration Forms

Classes	
Desired number of hours	
Pre-requisite courses	
Course descriptions	
Narrow down classes	
Possible courses for next term	
Term	(summer)
Possible Courses for next term	
Term	(summer)
Pace of courses (summer)	
Classes that will go toward	two majors

(Table Continued)

Teaching Personal Skills

Study Skills & Tips	Tutoring &/or supplemental instruction	Tutoring Labs	Tutoring Seminars on study skills	Tutoring
	Go to teacher			
	Study with classmate			
	Go to instructor with notes			
	Tape record lecture			
	Study before & after class			

(Table Continued)

College Policies	Grade suspension	ID card	Retaking classes
	Credit for internships	Graduation	Final exam schedule
	Grade point average	Transcripts	Registration account & information
		Immunization	
		Application & entrance to clinical program	Grade point average needed to get off of probation
		Withdrawal deadline	Drop & withdrawal deadline
		Early registration	Early or "priority" registration

(Table Continued)

Time Management

Plan ahead for exams &
semester breaks

Plan work schedule around
tutoring & classes

From a quick glance at the table (Table 23), one can see that US advisors addressed more selecting courses for next term, and planning class schedule for next term. For instance, SCC and US both addressed topics having to do with selection courses for next term like discussing possible courses students could take and narrowing down classes. These three items were discussed by SCC and MU advisors only and were not addressed at all by the advisors from MU.

Some differences that were observed from institution to institution were the topics that were only discussed by only one institution. US advisors addressed six items out of 30 items that none of the other institutional advisors addressed. These items included: transfer credits, advance placement or exemption courses, probation or dismissal, career alternatives, dropping or adding courses, and signing registration forms. MU advisors addressed three out of 30 items that none of the other institutional advisors addressed. These items included: special academic programs, internships or cooperative education, and time management.

There were more similarities than differences between advisors, however, regarding the nature of the advising relationship. The nature of the relationship was developmental in character. MU, SCC, and US advisors all expressed personal concern in similar ways including the advisors: addressing students by name, using humor, expressing personal, academic and/or financial aid concern, keeping eye contact, asking questions that revealed a familiarity between advisors and students. MU, SCC, and US advisors were also similar in their approach to decision-making. Advisors distributed information and options and encouraged students to follow-up on that information, yet, allowed students to make the final decisions. MU advisors did not address selecting courses, but the other advisors from SCC and US were similar in the delivery services regarding selecting courses. Advisors and students worked together – both contributing to the conversation. Advisors from US utilized a degree audit report and course items and topics and seemed to go into more detail than the advisors at the other two institutions

(MU and SCC). Different variables played a part in what was discussed and the detail of the discussion. First, all sessions at the three institutions were not observed during the same time of the semester. Observations at MU occurred during the first week of February, which was during the third week of the semester and three weeks before mid-semester; observations at SCC occurred during the end of February, which was five weeks after the semester began and one week before mid-semester; observations at US occurred during the middle and end of March, which was after mid-semester and four and five weeks prior to the end of the semester.

The incongruity of the observations at all institutions resulted in certain topics being more pressing than others based on the semester timeframe the observations were performed. For instance, MU advisors were the only advisors who addressed time management. Both advisors specifically encouraged students to plan ahead for exam and semester breaks. Because the observations were performed at the beginning of a spring semester, advisors were interested in students preparing for breaks and encouraging them to plan ahead. Another example involves US only topics. US advisors were the only advisors who addressed dropping courses and signing registration forms. Because the observations were performed closer to mid-semester than the other institutions' observations, the advisors' concern was to address information relevant to the timeline of the semester – which was right before the drop deadline and right before early registration/scheduling.

Another variable, which could have played a role in differences of topics discussed, was the type of session. Some advising sessions were performed in group settings and some were administered in individual settings. For example, observations at MU were different than observations at SCC and US because MU advisors held only group sessions while SCC and US held only individual sessions. This could have played a major role in what was discussed and in the amount of detail topics were discussed. Some students may be uncomfortable discussing

personal information like probation and suspension, personal concerns or problems, and evaluating academic progress in a group setting; therefore, one would expect to see a more detailed listing of topics discussed in each of those categories in individual sessions as opposed to in group sessions.

A third variable is advisor style. As in many professions, advisors have different philosophies and styles of how to administer advising sessions. Daller, Creamer and Creamer (1997) identified three different advising styles as “counselor, scheduler, and teacher;” (p. 33) therefore, the literature addresses and confirms that advisors are not necessarily parallel in style. The authors found that these advising styles clustered in the middle of the developmental-prescriptive continuum. Because they found three different styles, this reinforces that advisors vary in style of delivery; therefore, an inconsistency of topics covered and an inconsistency of frequency perception would be natural. Even though advising style was not a component of this study (as defined by Daller, Creamer and Creamer, 1997), I noticed that styles were different and varied from one advisor to another. If all advisors were equal or uniform in style, one should notice more homogenous results.

A final variable, which could have affected the differences in results, is the SSS grant objectives. Every TRIO SSS grant is written specifically for each institution; therefore, grant objectives could be either quite similar or dramatically different in order to tailor the objectives to the institutional need. The grant director is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the objectives are met. For example, the MU and US directors gave a detailed list of topics to each advisor to review with all students in the advising group or individual advising sessions. This could account for why the amount and detail of topics were discussed by these advisors. The list of topics helped guide the advising session. The SCC advisor did not have a list of topics to discuss and this could explain why there was limited subject matter (as compared to UM and US)

that was addressed in the SCC advising sessions. There was no list to help guide the sessions; therefore, the advising sessions' topics were driven by each individual students' need.

Research Question Two

According to all advisors from all three institutions, their advising styles were considered to be developmental. Some advisors rated their advising behaviors to be more developmental than others. As noted previously, the higher the score the more developmental and the less prescriptive the advising behaviors are. The table below (Table 24) summarizes the advisors' perceptions of their advising behaviors and compares their scores to each other.

Table 24

Summary and Comparison of All Advisor Perception Scores

Scale and subscales from AAI Part I	<u>Advisor Perceptions</u>		
	MU	SCC	US
DPA (DEV=57-112)	101.5**	99.0	93.0*
PE (DEV=33-64)	60.5**	58.0	48.0*
ADM (DEV=17-32)	25.5	25.0*	30.0**
SC (DEV=9-16)	15.5	16.0**	15.0*

Note. *Indicates lowest perception score. **Indicates highest perception score.

When comparing advisors from each institution to each other, one can see those institutional advisors who scored their advising behaviors the highest and the lowest. According to the DPA scale and subscale ranges, all advisors scored their advising behaviors to be developmental. The higher the score the more developmental the advisors perceived their behaviors to be. Not only did all advisors score their advising behaviors to be developmental, but their scores are also positioned higher than the range midpoint of the DPA and the DPA

subscales. As previously explained, the range midpoint is the median score, as well as the average score, of the range of each scale and subscale. Therefore, all advisors perceived their advising behaviors as being above average and extremely developmental.

Table 24 also allows a comparison of institutional advisors' perceptions of their developmental advising behavior scores. Table 24 denotes which institutional advisors scored their advising behaviors highest and lowest in the developmental range. Interestingly, MU advisors perceived their developmental advising behaviors to be higher than the other two institutions in the DPA scale and the PE subscale where SCC and US each perceived their developmental advising behaviors to be higher than the other two institutions in only one of the four categories – SC and ADM respectively. Another interesting point is that US perceived their developmental advising behaviors to be lower than the other two institutions in three of the four categories – DPA, PE, and SC. The SCC advisor only scored her advising behavior lower than the other two institutions regarding the ADM and MU did not perceive their advising behaviors to be lower than any of the two other institutions.

Research Question Three

According to all students from all three institutions, students' perceived their advisors' advising style as developmental. Some students rated their advisors' advising behaviors to be more developmental than others. As noted previously, the higher the score the more developmental and the less prescriptive the advising behaviors are. The table below (Table 25) summarizes the students' perception of their advisors' advising behaviors and compares their scores to each other.

Table 25

Summary and Comparison of All Student Perceptions Scores of Advisors

Scale and subscales from AAI Part I	<u>Student Perceptions</u>		
	MU	SCC	US
DPA (DEV=57-112)	67.2	63.8*	81.6**
PE (DEV=33-64)	33.8*	34.7	37.4**
ADM (DEV=17-32)	22.9	17.2*	29.9**
SC (DEV=9-16)	10.5*	11.8	14.3**

Note. *Indicates lowest perception score. **Indicates highest perception score.

When comparing students' perceptions from each institution to each other, one can see those student perceptions of institutional advisors who scored their advisors' behaviors to be the highest and the lowest. According to the DPA scale and subscale ranges, all students scored their advisors' advising behaviors to be developmental. The higher the score the more developmental the students perceived their advisors' advising behaviors to be. When comparing the students' perception of their advisors' scores to the range midpoint, all scores were positioned below the range midpoint except two – US students' perception scores for ADM and SC. As previously explained, the range midpoint is the median score, as well as the average score, of the range of each scale and subscale. This suggests that even though students perceived their advisors' advising behaviors to be developmental, the scores indicate that the developmental behaviors are weak. For example, the students' perception score for the MU PE subscale was 33.8, while the lowest possible developmental score in that PE range is 33. Also, the students' perception score for the ADM SCC subscale was 17.2, while the lowest possible developmental score in that ADM range is 17. Therefore, even though the all students perceived

their advisors' advising behaviors as being above average, the scores are faint and somewhat unconvincing.

Table 25 also allows a comparison of students' perception scores of their institutional advisors developmental advising behaviors. Table 24 denotes which students' perceptions of institutional advisors advising behaviors scored the highest and lowest in the developmental advising range. Interestingly, US students perceived their advisors' developmental advising behaviors to be higher than the other two institutions in all scales; therefore, none of the US students' perception scores of their advisors' advising behaviors were lower than the other two institutions. Also interestingly, MU and SCC shared the lowest student perception scores. The PE and SC subscales were the lowest scores in students' perceptions of advisors' advising behaviors for MU and the DPA scale and ADM subscale were the lowest scores in the students' perceptions of advisors' advising behaviors for SCC.

Research Question Four

There are consistencies and inconsistencies among advisors' and students' perception of advising type (Part I of AAI). According to all advisors and students from all three institutions, the advisors' advising styles were considered to be developmental. Some advisors rated their advising behaviors to be more developmental than others just as some students rated their advisors' advising behaviors to be more developmental than others. As noted previously, the higher the score the more developmental and the less prescriptive the advising behaviors are. The table below (Table 26) summarizes the advisors' and students' perceptions of the advisors' advising behaviors and compares the scores to each other and to each institution.

Table 26

Summary and Comparison of All Student Perceptions Scores of Advisors to Advisor Perception Scores

Scale and subscales from AAI Part I	<u>MU Perception</u>		<u>SCC Perception</u>		<u>US Perception</u>	
	Advisor	Student	Advisor	Student	Advisor	Student
DPA	101.5	67.2	99.0	63.8*	93.0	81.6**
PE	60.5	33.8*	58.0	34.7	48.0*	37.4**
ADM	25.5	22.9	25.0*	17.2*	30.0	29.9**
SC	15.5	10.5*	16.0	11.8	15.0*	14.3**

Note. *Indicates lowest perception score. **Indicates highest perception score. Developmental ranges include DPA (DEV= 57-112), PE (DEV= 33-64), ADM (DEV= 17-32), and SC (DEV= 9-16).

An intriguing finding is that US students scored their advisors higher than the other students scored their institutional advisors in all four categories, and US advisors scored their advising behaviors lower than the other institutional advisors in three of the four categories. While comparing highest and lowest scores, it seems like US students and advisors are the least consistent; however, while examining the raw scores, the US students and advisors scores are the most consistent in all four developmental categories. In other words, the US students and advisors number scores were closer than the students' and advisors' number scores from the other two institutions.

Another interesting note is that in all cases, all students' perception scores were lower than all advisors' perception scores in every developmental category. Advisors perceived their advising behaviors to be more developmental than the students

There were also consistencies and inconsistencies when addressing the frequencies of topics that were addressed during advising sessions from Part II of the AAI. MU students, MU advisors or I (the researcher) stated that all 30 topics from the items listed on Part II of the AAI were discussed five or more times. Of significant interest is that the MU students, MU advisors and I (the researcher) agreed that 12 of the 30 topics were covered five or more times during the MU advising sessions. SCC students, SCC advisor and I agreed that only three topics were covered during SCC advising sessions five or more times; they agreed that two of the 30 items were not discussed five or more times during SCC advising sessions. US students, US advisors, and I agreed that 12 topics were covered during advising sessions five or more times. They also agreed that three topics were not covered five or more times during US advising sessions.

These reveal the consistencies between students, advisors and me (researcher) of those items that were discussed five or more time in advising sessions and those items that were agreed by advisors, students and me (the researcher) that were not discussed five or more times during advising sessions. Therefore, for a possible of 90 items total, there were consistencies between advisors, students, and me (researcher) for only 32 items (35.5% consistency rate).

More significantly were the inconsistencies of results. Out of 90 possible items (30 items for three institutions), 58 items (64.4%) were agreed on by advisor only, student only, me (researcher) only, advisor and student, advisor and me (researcher), or student and me (researcher). For instance, there were 11 topics that were thought to be discussed five or more times by the MU students only. Plus, there were 17 topics that were thought to be discussed five or more times by the SCC students only. Additionally, the US advisors and US students only agreed that nine topics were discussed.

There are several variables that could affect the developmental scores provided by advisors, students, and me (the researcher) and scoring regarding the consistencies and

inconsistencies of the frequencies of topics addressed in advising sessions. First, inconsistencies of developmental scoring could be on account of advisors, students and/or me (the researcher) reading or interpreting the Academic Advising Inventory differently. Differences in interpretations could lead to diverse and unexpected discrepancies in scoring.

Second, the consistencies of scoring that were described (especially between US advisors and students) regarding the similarity of scoring for the DPA scale and the DPA subscales could be attributed to the academic level of students. As earlier revealed, the admissions criteria for US are the highest for all Louisiana public institutions. One can possibly assume that students at US have higher standardized test scores. US students, then, may be “better students” and perceive things better than the other students at the other two institutions. The caliber of student could account for US students’ answers being more “on target” than the other students from the other two institutions.

Third, the inconsistencies of frequencies could be a matter of the advisors, students and me (the researcher) recalled different versions or held different interpretations of what occurred during advising sessions. For example, in one instance, when the advisor and student discussed the student’s grades, I – as the researcher – checked off that they discussed academic progress and experiences in different classes. The advisor and/or the student may have not checked experience in different classes because their interpretation of discussing grades had only to do with the student’s academic progress.

Fourth, inconsistencies of frequency of topics addressed may have to do with the findings only examining those topics that were addressed five or more times. There were many items that advisors, students and I all agreed were discussed at least once. Those items; however, were not included in the consistent items because the findings focused only on those items that were discussed during the session five or more times. For example, SCC advisors, students and I all

identified that college policies were addressed during the sessions; however, none of them stated that it was discussed five or more times.

Research Question Five

Student satisfaction was measured in such a way to compare the highest and lowest ranking of Part I of the AAI to Part III of the AAI. Rankings were created based on raw scores from Part I and Part III of the AAI. The highest and lowest rankings from Part I were then compared to the highest and lowest rankings from Part III. As previously noted, the highest student satisfaction ranking for MU was that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students and the highest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with Academic Decision Making. The lowest student satisfaction ranking was the item related to having sufficient time for advising sessions and the lowest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with Personalizing Education.

In sum, for MU students, the more the advisor discussed Academic Decision Making in a developmental manner, the more likely the MU students would recommend the advisor to other students. Also, the less the advisor Personalized Education during the advising session, the less likely the student was satisfied with having sufficient time for the advising sessions.

As noted, for SCC, six items tied for the highest student satisfaction ranking. They were: general satisfaction; advisors providing accurate information; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; advisors being available to students; overall effectiveness of advisors; and that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. The highest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with Selecting Courses. The lowest student satisfaction ranking was the item related to having sufficient time for advising sessions and the lowest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with Academic Decision Making.

In sum, for SCC students, the more the SCC advisor discussed items addressing Selecting Courses, the more likely SCC students were satisfied with general satisfaction; advisors providing accurate information; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; advisors being available to students; overall effectiveness of advisors; and that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. Also, the less the SCC advisor discussed Academic Decision Making items, the less likely SCC students were satisfied with having sufficient time for advising sessions.

As previously noted, there were five items, which tied for the highest student satisfaction ranking at US. They were: general satisfaction; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; having sufficient time for advising sessions; overall effectiveness of advisors; and that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. The highest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with Academic Decision Making. The lowest student satisfaction ranking was the item related to the advisor availability and the lowest student perception of advising ranking was for those items dealing with Personalizing Education.

In sum, for US students, the more the US advisors discussed Academic Decision Making items, the more likely it was that the US students were satisfied with general satisfaction; advisors providing information relating to deadlines, policies and procedures; having sufficient time for advising sessions; overall effectiveness of advisors; and that the students would highly recommend the advisor to other students. Also, the less the US advisors addressed Personalizing Education items with students, the less likely that US students were satisfied with advisor availability.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study provide information that aids in understanding advisors' and students' perceptions of the types of advising that occurs in Student Support Services programs. The results also give information regarding the satisfaction level of students as related to the type of advising, which are particularly important for practice. It is meaningful for educators recognize and understand that there are consistencies and inconsistencies among advisors' and students' perceptions of advising behaviors in the SSS programs. The significance of finding consistencies and inconsistencies lies in student retention. Tinto (1999) argues that there has been a lack of participation of higher educational institutions who have studied those institutional conditions which promote student retention. Information and advice, support, involvement and learning are all vital conditions that promote retention (Tinto, 1999). The presence of consistencies and inconsistencies can also be generalized to other, advisors and students in higher education. Once the consistencies and inconsistencies are recognized, then administrators can address the discrepancies and work toward correcting them so that all – advisors, students and administrators – have a clear picture of advising behaviors. Again, retention is the key reason for addressing the consistencies and inconsistencies. Tinto is clear that most current retention programs for at-risk students are basically “add-on” programs that do not take the problem seriously enough. Having a clear and definite sense of advising behaviors is imperative for advising assessment and evaluation purposes which could then lead to reaching higher retention goals.

The results can aid educators in both understanding how advising behaviors and perceptions could impact future policies and by possibly providing additional services to assist and support disadvantaged college students. For example, particular results could be used to assess how advisors could provide more developmental approaches to advising. This could lead

to a reassessment of the number of students each SSS advisor is assigned, taking on a different approach to advising, providing training for advisors in developmental advising theory, and creating additional services or expanding existing ones to address the advising needs of the at-risk student population. Educators could also use these results to create new or revise existing advising services for the general student population. Results, specifically those relating to satisfaction and those regarding the similarities and differences of developmental advising perceptions, could help advisors develop new skills and knowledge that were not previously required (O'Banion, 1972).

Recommendations for Research

This study also yields pertinent recommendations for additional higher education research in the scope of college level advising services and behaviors. These topics include advising at-risk students, advising related to satisfaction with the at-risk population, advising related to retention, program evaluation of advising services, and advising survey instrument.

First, additional research involving advising at-risk students (defined as low-income and first-generation students) is needed. Currently, there is research regarding effectiveness of advising and research regarding general effectiveness of Student Support Services programs; however, there is no current literature blending the two topics. This study attempts to begin to address the lack of “blended” literature. Replication studies at other higher education institutions and at other SSS programs would compliment these findings.

Second, more research concerning advising satisfaction is needed. There is research that addresses advising satisfaction; however, the research does not “qualify” or define advising services *before* students are asked to answer satisfaction questions. In other words, how can students score or rank their satisfaction with advising services if they do not know what kinds of services they *should* be receiving? In my experience, students are generally satisfied with

different services on campus; however, as students learn what they *should* or *could* have received have received, then they become less satisfied. More satisfaction studies that define the scope of the advising activities first, then ask students' opinions on the advising activities should be done in the future to give a more accurate picture of student satisfaction. This type of satisfaction research is imperative to understanding the true advising satisfaction levels of students.

There is much research regarding retention in higher education; however, more retention studies regarding at-risk students and the role advising plays in retention is needed in the literature. Again, there is no current literature blending the two topics of at-risk advising with the retention of at-risk students. Because at-risk students' needs are different – and usually greater than – the general student population, more research is required to understand how advising at-risk students affect their retention.

Fourth, different types of SSS program evaluation studies are needed. SSS research generally follows a quantitative approach and generally focuses on program performance as a whole. Component studies would be beneficial in evaluating which areas of the whole grant were effective. In other words, I propose that research focused on each component of the whole SSS grant would be helpful in determining which parts are most effective. This could lead to better serving the needs of at-risk students.

Next, more qualitative research is needed regarding SSS and advising. Providing case studies of at-risk individuals who have been successful and unsuccessful could prove beneficial by allowing them to tell their stories of their accomplishments and challenges. These “stories” or experiences could provide a better understanding of at-risk students' needs. Qualitative research would give at-risk students a louder voice in the research instead of being a number or a statistic.

Finally, new or revised instruments to evaluate advising programs and behaviors need to be developed. Part I of the AAI survey is confusing because participants must choose from a

pair of statements then rate the chosen statement. Many times participants questioned me on the instructions and I had to reiterate how to proceed. A more straightforward and more sensitive instrument needs to be developed for further assessment of advising behaviors.

Concluding Remarks

This study had many results that surprised me. Before the study, I mentally hypothesized that more prescriptive advising would have been exposed by both advisors and students. I came to realize, though, that advising could not be easily boxed into separate categories easily. The more I came to understand developmental and prescriptive advising, the harder it became to label advising activities as merely one or the other. Advising is based on a continuum that has many shades of gray and it is a delicate process to determine those shades. I learned that advising in Student Support Services programs is not only developmental or only prescriptive – it is a combination that addresses concerns and answers questions but does so in such a way as to promote the whole student. My hope is that this research will aid others in the topics of advising, the at-risk student population, and satisfaction research in understanding their own advising systems on campus.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Study Title: Advising Perceptions in Student Support Services Programs

I _____ agree to participate in a
(participant's name)
research study conducted by Louisiana State University doctoral student, Kim Andrepont, as part of her dissertation requirements. I agree to allow the researcher to observe an advising session. Information relevant to the study is information regarding my perceptions of advising in the Student Support Services program at _____.
(participating institution's name)

After the advising session, I will complete a survey on advising perceptions that will take approximately 10 minutes. I understand that there are no known physical or emotional risks associated with this study. Real names will not be used in the dissertation; names will be replaced by pseudonyms in order to keep participants' identities confidential. I understand that I may choose to stop participation at anytime and will not be penalized in any way for discontinuing participation in the study.

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me. Please print name and then sign and date below:

(printed name)

(signature and date)

15. Discussing college policies
16. Signing registration forms
17. Dropping and/or adding course(s)
18. Discussing personal values
19. Discussing possible majors/academic concentrations
20. Discussing important social or political issues
21. Discussing content of courses
22. Selecting courses for the next term
23. Planning a class schedule for the next term
24. Discussing transfer credit and policies
25. Discussing advanced placement or exempting courses
26. Discussing career alternatives
27. Discussing probation and dismissal policies
28. Discussing financial aid
29. Identifying other campus offices that can provide assistance
30. Discussing study skills or study tips
31. Discussing degree or major/academic concentration requirements
32. Discussing personal concerns or problems
33. Discussing studies abroad or other special academic programs
34. Discussing internship or cooperative education opportunities
35. Talking about or setting personal goals
36. Evaluating academic progress
37. Getting to know each other
38. Discussing extracurricular activities
39. Discussing job placement opportunities
40. Discussing the purposes of a college education
41. Declaring or changing a major/academic concentration
42. Discussing time management
43. Talking about experiences in different classes
44. Talking about what you are doing besides taking classes

PART III

Considering the academic advising you have participated in at this college this year, respond to the following five statements on the answer sheet using the code below.

A = Strongly Disagree

C = Agree

B = Disagree

D = Strongly Agree

45. I am satisfied in general with the academic advising I have received.
46. I have received accurate information about courses, programs, and requirements through academic advising.
47. Sufficient prior notice has been provided about deadlines related to institutional policies and procedures.
48. Advising has been available when I needed it.
49. Sufficient time has been available during advising sessions.
50. I found this advisor to be extremely effective overall during advising sessions.
51. I would highly recommend this advisor to other students.

Please answer the following questions:

52. How has this advisor had an impact on you personally?

53. How has this advisor had an impact on your academic work?

PART IV

Please respond to the following questions. Continue marking your responses on the same answer sheet.

50. What is your sex?
 - (a) male
 - (b) female

51. What is your cultural/racial background?
 - (a) African American/Black
 - (b) Hispanic American/Latin American
 - (c) Asian American Native
 - (d) Native American
 - (e) White/Caucasian
 - (f) Biracial/multiracial
 - (g) Other
 - (h) Decline to respondor a Pacific Islander

52. What was your age at your last birthday?
 (a) 18 or younger (c) 20 (e) 22 (g) 24 (i) 31 or older
 (b) 19 (d) 21 (f) 23 (h) 25 - 30
53. What is your academic class standing?
 (a) Freshman (first year) (c) Junior (third year) (e) Irregular/Transient/Special Student
 (b) Sophomore (second year) (d) Senior (fourth or more years) (f) Other than any of the above
54. Which of the following **best describes** the majority of the academic advising you have received this academic year?
Select only one.
 (a) Advised individually by assigned advisor at an advising center
 (b) Advised individually by any available advisor at an advising center
 (c) Advised individually, not through an advising center
 (d) Advised with a group of students
 (e) Advised by a peer (student) advisor
 (f) Advised in conjunction with a course in which I was enrolled
 (g) Advised in a manner other than the alternatives described above
 (h) No advising received
55. Approximately how much time was generally spent in each advising session?
 (a) less than 15 minutes (c) 31-45 minutes (e) more than 1 hour
 (b) 15-30 minutes (d) 46-60 minutes
56. How many academic advising sessions have you had this academic year in your **current** situation?
 (a) none (c) two (e) four (g) six (i) eight
 (b) one (d) three (f) five (h) seven (j) nine or more
57. How many academic advising sessions **in total** have you had this year?
 (a) none (c) two (e) four (g) six (i) eight
 (b) one (d) three (f) five (h) seven (j) nine or more

Appendix C

Original Advisor Checklist and Observation Sheet

Observations: Content of Advising Session: Topic/activity

Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP)

Notes:

- college policies
- transfer credits
- advance placement or exempting courses
- probation or dismissal
- declaring a major

Providing Information (PI)

- content of courses
- financial aid
- other campus offices
- special academic programs (i.e. study abroad)
- internships or cooperative education
- job placement opportunities

Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR)

- personal values
- possible majors
- important social or political issues
- career alternatives
- degree or major requirements
- personal concerns or problems
- evaluating academic progress
- getting to know each other
- extracurricular activities
- the purpose of college education
- experiences in different classes
- current involvement outside the classroom

Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS)

- dropping or adding courses
- signing registration forms
- selecting courses for next term
- planning class schedule for next term

Teaching Personal Skills (TPS)

- study skills and tips
- setting personal goals
- time management

Other:

Appendix D

Revised Advisor Checklist and Observation Sheet

Observations: Content of Advising Session: Topic/activity

Exploring Institutional Policies (EIP)

Notes:

- transfer credits
- advance placement or exempting courses
- probation or dismissal
- financial aid
- special academic programs (i.e. study abroad)

Academic Majors and Courses (AMC)

- declaring a major
- content of courses
- other campus offices
- possible majors
- career alternatives
- degree or major requirements

Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships (PDIR)

- internships or cooperative education
- job placement opportunities
- personal values
- important social or political issues
- setting personal goals
- personal concerns or problems
- evaluating academic progress
- getting to know each other
- extracurricular activities
- the purpose of college education
- experiences in different classes
- current involvement outside the classroom

Registration and Class Scheduling (RCS)

- dropping or adding courses
- signing registration forms
- selecting courses for next term
- planning class schedule for next term

Teaching Personal Skills (TPS)

- study skills and tips
- time management
- college policies

Other:

Nature of the Advising Relationship:

4. Personalize the advising session

(i.e. Does the advisor express personal concern?

Is there a closeness between the advisor and student?

Does the advisors approach vary among students?)

5. Decision Making

(i.e. Who has the responsibility for making and carrying out decisions?)

6. Selecting Courses

(i.e. How are courses selected?

Who makes final decisions on which courses will be scheduled?)

Vita

Kim Andrepont Warren graduated from the University of Southwestern Louisiana located in Lafayette, Louisiana, in December 1992, where she earned a Baccalaureate of Science degree majoring in psychology and minoring in sociology. In August 1993, she enrolled in Louisiana State University Agricultural and Mechanical College while she pursued and earned the degree of Master of Social Work. Kim is credentialed as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Louisiana.

Kim has been employed by Nicholls State University in the Academic Success Program (Student Support Services) since August 1995. In this program Kim worked as a counselor providing academic, financial aid, career, personal, transfer and graduate school advising to at-risk students. In 1999, she was promoted to Assistant Director, while still maintaining her counseling responsibilities.

During her employment at Nicholls State University, Kim was chosen to serve in many departmental and university committees including the Orientation Committee and the Committee on Social and Community Concerns. She has participated in many state, regional and national conferences sponsored by the Louisiana Student Assistance Programs and the Department of Education. Currently, Kim is concluding her position at Nicholls State University and is looking forward to pursuing new and exciting employment.

Kim now resides in Lafayette, Louisiana, with her husband, George, one-year old son, Harrison, and a cat named Tiger.