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This study examined the impact of the University of North Carolina Greensboro's Strategies for Academic Success (SAS 100) program on the self-efficacy and academic achievement of students on academic probation. The Student Strategies for Success Survey, an instrument based upon Samejima's Graded Response Model, was used to collect data from 279 participants in a pre/post manner. The results showed a significant difference between participants' pre- and post-scores, indicating improved levels of Social Behavior, Academic Preparedness, Interdependence, Dedication, Self-knowledge, and Confidence. Qualitative data were collected through individual student interviews and document review to capture reasons why students performed poorly enough to be placed on academic probation and how the SAS 100 program facilitates the development of improved academic strategies. The factors that impact student retention were examined based on the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

This study identified and described the characteristics of four unique cohort groups of students on academic probation. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that the SAS 100 program had a positive impact by facilitating participants' development of improved academic strategies. Further, the Student Strategies for Success survey proved to be a reliable instrument in measuring the development of students on probation.

MONITORING FOR SUCCESS: IMPLEMENTING A PROACTIVE PROBATION
PROGRAM FOR DIVERSE, AT-RISK COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research problem with a description of the concern for retaining academic probation students in university settings. Starting with a review of the theoretical background of college student retention models, the chapter continues with the purpose of the research, general research questions, and the definition of key terms. Finally, the significance and limitations of the study are discussed along with a brief organization of the remaining chapters.

College Student Retention

The door to college is open for increasing numbers of students for whom adapting to college may be a great challenge. Hansen (1998) has noted that the overall academic preparation level has declined for students entering college and that academic disengagement in college has increased among many students. Choy (2003) has described contemporary college students as a diverse group in which 30 percent are minorities, 20 percent were born outside the United States or have a foreign-born parent, and 11 percent spoke a language other than English while growing up. Choy also emphasizes that most college students have responsibilities outside the classroom. For example, about three-quarters of all four-year college students now earn a paycheck, and about one-quarter of them work full-time.

The foregoing examples suggest that many students are at risk for failure because of weak academic skills, personal circumstances, and other potential difficulties in adapting to the college environment. These students may leave college devoid of the benefits associated with a degree and lacking many of the skills necessary for future success (Dunn, 1995).

In an effort to improve retention, many institutions are enrolling students who have received poor grades into academic probation programs. Programs for students on academic probation tend to fall into one of three categories: a) those where students are involved in classroom or workshop-based interventions, b) those where students work individually with a counselor or advisor, and c) combinations of the two models.

While both classroom/workshop and advising/counseling intervention models have varying degrees of success, they rarely use specific theoretical orientations for explaining student achievement and success. There is seldom an effort to bundle both advising/counseling and classroom/workshop intervention methods in assisting the same group of students. Typically, the impact of the intervention is evaluated by the number of students who remain enrolled for the next academic period, without examining changes in student attitudes, aspirations, or abilities.

Statement of the Problem

Built upon a review of the theoretical framework in college student retention and of programs for probation students currently in place, this study describes the Strategies for Academic Success (SAS 100) course at the University of North Carolina – Greensboro (UNCG), a unique program based on what has been described as a

motivational/empowerment model by the Student Academic Services staff, that appears to be successful in assisting these students. UNCG's SAS 100 program was developed from theoretical orientations proposed in *Reality Therapy* (Glasser, 2000), *Appreciative Inquiry* (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003), *Social Cognitive Theory* (Bandura, 1997), and Covey's (1989) models for personal success. The program uses an integrated model of advising/counseling and classroom/workshop approaches. In this study, the model was described based on its theoretical framework and students' experiences. Further, the effectiveness of the model in assisting probation students was measured using a combined method research design.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Based on a review of theories on student learning, student success, and student retention, models and programs in college student retention were discussed. Then, their implications to the implementation of the motivational/empowerment model used in the Strategies for Academic Success 100 (SAS 100) program was provided.

Theoretical Orientation of SAS 100

Bandura's (1997) Sociocognitive Theory provides a basis for the life planning, goal-setting, and learning strategies components of the model, emphasizing the importance of self-referent learning in which students' activate and sustain behaviors that support academic achievement. Much of the research into self-regulated learning has emphasized that students can activate and sustain the cognitions and behaviors that support achievement. A central component of the SAS 100 program is to support students in becoming self-regulated learners who set effective goals, employ appropriate learning

strategies, and evaluate the requirements of learning tasks adequately in order to achieve at improved levels. Self-regulated learners learn to accomplish academic goals strategically, manage to overcome obstacles using a battery of resources, and feel greater confidence in the decisions they have made (Randi & Corno, 2000). Improvement in self-efficacy also assists students in achieving improved life-planning skills regarding career choice (Pajares, 1996), financial management (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992), and interpersonal skills (Bandura, 1997) – areas that are important elements of the SAS 100 curriculum.

Glasser's (2000) work provides a basis for the personal responsibility component of the SAS 100 program. When students accept personal responsibility for themselves, they choose their own destiny. The practice of Reality Therapy is an ongoing process made up of creating a trusting environment, and using techniques which help a person discover what they really want, reflect on what they are doing now, and create a plan for fulfilling their goals. Reality Therapy is a process of empowerment, based on the belief that people are products, not victims, of the past. Reality Therapy motivates students by emphasizing the power of doing what is in the person's control.

Identifying one's strengths is a critical factor in changing academic standing. While many probation student programs focus on the student's deficits, this model attempts to further enhance their strengths through the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is a human systems business change model, developed at Case Western Reserve by Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987) that has recently been adapted to higher education and academic advising (Bloom & Martin, 2004). AI emphasizes the power of the positive

question. AI takes a strengths-based approach to bringing about change, focusing on the root causes of success rather than the root causes of failure. Students answer questions in the form of storytelling by drawing from positive life experiences and using these experiences to identify areas of strength and ability. The focus is on exploring “What is right” in their lives and how they can create more of it (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003).

Students who are able to manage themselves and continuously plan and monitor their behaviors in pursuit of their goals are implementing self-management. The self-management component of the model is based on the work of Covey (1989) and his text *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. For example, the curriculums in many student success classes focus on “time management” instead of “self-management.” The curriculum of the SAS 100 program emphasizes “self-management” because, after all, a person cannot manage time, they can only manage themselves. In Covey’s third habit, he suggests to “Put First Things First.” Within that habit, Covey discusses the four quadrants of self-management and suggests that we should stay in Quadrant II, that is, activities that are not urgent, yet important. These quadrants are illustrated in Figure 1. The SAS 100 curriculum addresses the importance of placing the most important things first in life.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Quadrant I	Quadrant II
Not Important	Quadrant III	Quadrant IV

Figure 1. Covey's Four Quadrants

Group interaction with other students and individual interaction with the instructor are important to the success of the program. Students interact in a small group setting (a maximum of ten students in each section) where reflection and self-disclosure occur regularly. This model provides a supportive environment for the students in which they can easily relate to others in similar academic situations. The instructor facilitates the discussion and self-reflection in the model. Each student is required to meet individually with his or her instructor on two occasions during the eight weeks of the program. The reasons the students believe contributed to their poor academic performance, their current grades for the term, and their plans for restoring academic standing are discussed at these individual meetings. These individual meetings are instrumental to the success of the program and the model. While this relationship with an instructor can have profound influence, many SAS 100 students comment that before this program they have never talked individually with any of their instructors in a one-on-one setting. This relationship with the instructor is the key given by Astin's (1993) and

Light's (2001) work indicating that connection to faculty inside and outside the classroom is central to student's success and their retention.

Through the face-to-face discussions with the instructor and the class activities and assignments, each student is able to construct a profile for academic recovery, which includes well-defined, operationalized personal goals, an understanding of their strengths and needs as students, and a plan for using this information to recover academically.

SAS 100 Program Evolution

Numerous changes have taken place in the SAS 100 program since it started in the 1999-2000 academic year at UNCG. It is important to note that the program started as a study skills-based program. The study skills curriculum did little to empower the students and the majority of students were suspended. The program started as a full semester-long course; however, the full semester-long course proved to be grueling and frustrating for both students and instructors, especially given that there is no academic credit for completing the course. The program now meets for eight weeks starting at the beginning of the second week of school.

All possible efforts are made to ensure that all students who are required to take the course are enrolled by the first class meeting. Students are contacted via letter, e-mail, and phone to let them know that they must register for the course to avoid suspension. The course starts at the beginning of the second week of classes so that all students have an opportunity to enroll in the course. If the student does not register for SAS 100, the student is suspended from the institution resulting in being withdrawn from all courses. Students are also suspended if they miss one class meeting of SAS 100. Staff members

refer to this course as one with “teeth” because there are extremely high consequences if a student misses SAS 100 or fails to register for the course. The extreme consequence forces the students to take the course seriously, which is essential for this course to be effective. The SAS 100 curriculum is implemented using Downing’s (2002) text *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life*. This text was chosen because it covers the four key topic areas of the model: personal responsibility, identifying strengths, goal setting/life planning, and self-management. Students are required to complete weekly journals from *On Course* as well as to attend two instructor meetings throughout the eight-week period. Faculty, staff, graduate students, and adjunct instructors teach the course.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is threefold: 1) to describe the characteristics of college students on academic probation at UNCG; 2) to depict the impact of the SAS 100 programs on probation students; and 3) to measure the effectiveness of the SAS 100 program on student retention, student achievement, and student self-improvement.

Research Questions

The general research question for this study is “What is the impact of the motivational/empowerment model implemented at UNCG on academic probation students?” The following specific research questions were discussed:

1. What are the major social and academic characteristics of students on academic probation at UNCG?

2. What are the major reasons for students performing poorly enough academically to be placed on academic probation at UNCG?
3. How does the SAS 100 program facilitate students on academic probation to improve their academic strategies?

Definition of Key Terms

Academic probation is regarded as the point at which a student has fallen below university academic standards for overall grade point average (GPA) and faces the possibility of dismissal (Wlazelek & Coulter, 1999). Cruise (2002) notes that at most institutions, students are placed on academic probation if they have earned a grade point average (GPA) lower than 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. At the University of North Carolina – Greensboro, academic probation is described as follows: Freshmen will be placed on academic probation if their cumulative GPA falls below 1.75; Sophomores, juniors, and seniors will be placed on academic probation if their cumulative GPA falls below a 2.00; Any full-time, degree-seeking student who fails to pass at least 6 semester hours in a given semester shall be placed on academic probation (University of North Carolina – Greensboro, 2004). For the purposes of this study, UNCG’s definition will be used.

The term *student attrition* refers to students who leave a class before its completion. This includes students who enroll, but stop attending the course without a formal withdrawal, as well as students who have completed an official withdrawal procedure (Bean, 1982).

The terms *at risk* or *high risk* describe those students whose probability of withdrawal from college is above average. Demographic characteristics of groups that

have been targeted as high-risk by higher education scholars have included: racial and ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged students, persons with disabilities, first-generation college students, international students, non-traditional students, athletes, and transfer students (Jones & Watson, 1990).

Significance of the Study

Despite the extensive body of research addressing the problem of student attrition, Seidman (1996) stated that little improvement has been made in retention rates among higher education institutions. The American College Testing Center (ACT) for the Enhancement of Educational Practices (2002) confirmed Seidman's assessment by reporting an actual decrease in retention rates from 1994 to 2002. ACT data from 2002 demonstrated that 74 percent of first-year students returned for their second year of college.

Students who fail or dropout induce both financial and psychological costs for themselves, for the educational institutions, and for society. The students themselves often risk incurring a student loan debt without the financial benefits of a degree. For an individual student, a college degree leads to a 73 percent higher salary, greater access to healthcare, improved working conditions, and greater personal and professional mobility than only a high school diploma (New Millennium Project, 1998). Furthermore, academic probation students might become demotivated, and further demotivate their student peers and teachers. Student underperformance or dropout is expensive for institutions as well. Many institutions are funded based on institutional performance indicators that include the retention and graduation of enrolled students (Harbour, 2002). The lost revenues from

attrition and the cost of recruiting new students can be substantial (Noel-Levitz USA Funds, 2003).

Additionally, graduation rates are now considered a primary factor in institutional rankings (Reisberg, 1999). If a college fails to graduate too many of its students, it creates negative public perceptions, which in turn translates into lower application and retention rates, less tuition, and less full-time equivalency-based revenue. Finally, society is affected by lower achievement and higher dropout rates, which translate into greater public expense from student grants and loans. In general, the public costs of higher education are not counterbalanced with more qualified students for the labor market.

In summary, the proven benefits associated with degree attainment, and recent changes in funding for higher education, demonstrate the need to reduce the significant loss of potential associated with student attrition including the opportunity for greater economic prosperity and enhanced maturity and life skills. A less educated citizenry serves to suppress the country's tax base, and diminishes economic growth and productivity. Institutions lose funding, which limits potential for optimal instruction, research, and service (Noel-Levitz USA Funds, 2003). In order to prevent future loss, it is imperative that researchers in higher education continue to investigate the reasons that contribute to student departure, and to explore institutional strategies that successfully improve college student retention rates.

Effective academic advising is considered a significant process within an enriching educational environment (Noel, 1985) and a number of institutions have implemented advising programs to assist probation students, yet no theory-driven model

for retaining probation students has been identified and the effectiveness of probation programs has not been systematically measured. This study was an in-depth investigation of the SAS 100 model's impact on student retention, resulting in information to facilitate institutional policy and resource allocation in efforts to improve college student retention. The measurement and qualitative research techniques used in this study will aid in the development of explanatory models for academic probation.

Limitations

Several limitations impact the generalizability of the research. The SAS 100 program is unique to UNCG and depends upon the services offered on the UNCG campus. For example, UNCG has a TRIO and a Supplemental Instruction program, while other campuses may have fewer or different academic support programs. Additionally, UNCG is a mid-sized, southeastern institution with diverse demographics. While it is not clear whether these campus attributes may have impeded the generalizability of the study, other institutions should carefully examine campus attributes and student needs before attempting to establish a program similar to SAS 100.

The researcher was involved in the creating and implementing the SAS 100 program, and he served as an instructor of one section of the course during the semester in which this study was conducted. In order to avoid researcher bias in measuring program impact, the researcher did not interview participants who were enrolled in his class or with whom he worked as an advisor.

In order to better understand the factors that impact college students' academic performance and to qualitatively measure over time the impact of the SAS 100 program

on participants' development of strategies for academic success, face-to-face interviews were used in this study. However, among the 279 survey respondents, only 23 volunteered to be interviewed. This small number of interviewees limited the external validity and generalizability of the qualitative findings.

Organization of the Study

The long-term goal of this research is to understand the needs of academic probation students, so that interventions can be designed to improve the retention of at-risk college students. The structure of the dissertation follows the guidelines established by the School of Education at the UNCG, and affords a systemic framework for the study. Following the description of the problem in Chapter I, Chapter II provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to academic probation which further refines the research questions and methodology. Chapter III, dealing with the methodology of the study, provides a detailed description of the improved research instruments and the research design. The analyses and results comprise Chapter IV, while Chapter V presents the conclusions drawn from the study and offers recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

While there is an increasing need to assist academically at-risk students, there has been little effort to develop comprehensive theoretical models that facilitate understanding as to why college students go on academic probation. Beginning with a brief overview of student learning theories from a sociocognitive perspective, this chapter reviews theories on student success. Then, the major retention theories and models used for college student retention are discussed to elucidate the rationale behind the models currently in use for retention programs. Following the review of theories, some exemplary programs for student retention are outlined. Finally, the motivational/empowerment model used in UNCG's SAS 100 (Strategies for Academic Success 100) program is introduced.

College students on academic probation are students who find themselves in a specific student status because of having experienced failure. At the university level, where admissions tend to be selective, both the institution and the student have expected that the student will perform successfully academically. When students go on academic probation, it suggests that something has gone wrong in the system.

This concerns leaders in higher education, since state governments normally see attrition from courses as implying an inefficient use of resources, and high dropout rates make them suspicious about the quality of an institution (Thompson, 1998). That only

about one-half of college attendees eventually graduate is widely perceived as a failure of higher education institutions or of the entire educational system. This view is strongly held by some state legislators and the state coordinating boards and higher education services offices responsible for higher education funding. In some states the concern with graduate rates and time to graduation has led to the adoption of retention and graduation rates as criteria for evaluating institutional performance (Banta, Rudolph, Van Dyke, & Fisher, 1996). For instance, in 1994 Texas identified the number of graduates as a criterion for performance funding (Ashworth, 1994) and by 1999 Virginia tied institutional funding to graduation rates among a number of other outcomes (Hebel, 1999). By 2001, 36 states had passed state laws that made institutional performance indicators, including the retention and graduation of enrolled students, the basis of funding (Harbour, 2002).

Even at institutions not heavily dependent upon public funding, such as private liberal arts colleges, the cost of attrition can be substantial because of lost tuition, fees, and other revenue. In 2003, the Wesley Peachtree Group concluded that at a leading private Atlanta institution the actual cost of replacing a student was more than \$5,100 and that the total cost of student attrition for the institution was \$785,000 for a single year (Noel-Levitz USA Funds, 2003).

Clearly, along with the ethical obligations institutions have in helping students succeed, there are political and financial pressures as well. Consequently, developing effective interventions for poor academic performance among students who were

anticipated to perform well is a key concern in higher education institutions, and there is a need for a solid understanding of the models that may explain this problem.

While there is currently no proposed model for understanding why students go on academic probation, there have been several studies that examine this population of students. Call, Hendricks, and Jones (1990) found that compared with academically successful college students, at-risk students are less trusting and less ethical in dealing with others, they exhibit more behaviors and attitudes that lead to social alienation or emotional disturbance, they experience more anxiety in social interactions, and they have lower opinions of themselves. Maxwell (1979) found that high-risk college students who do not succeed have made a poorer adaptation to the college environment, have less clearly defined aspirations, are less committed to their goals, are less willing to study hard, and have weaker interpersonal skills. In support of the role of nonacademic factors with this group, Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) found that emotional and social adjustment factors predicted college attrition as well as or better than academic adjustment factors.

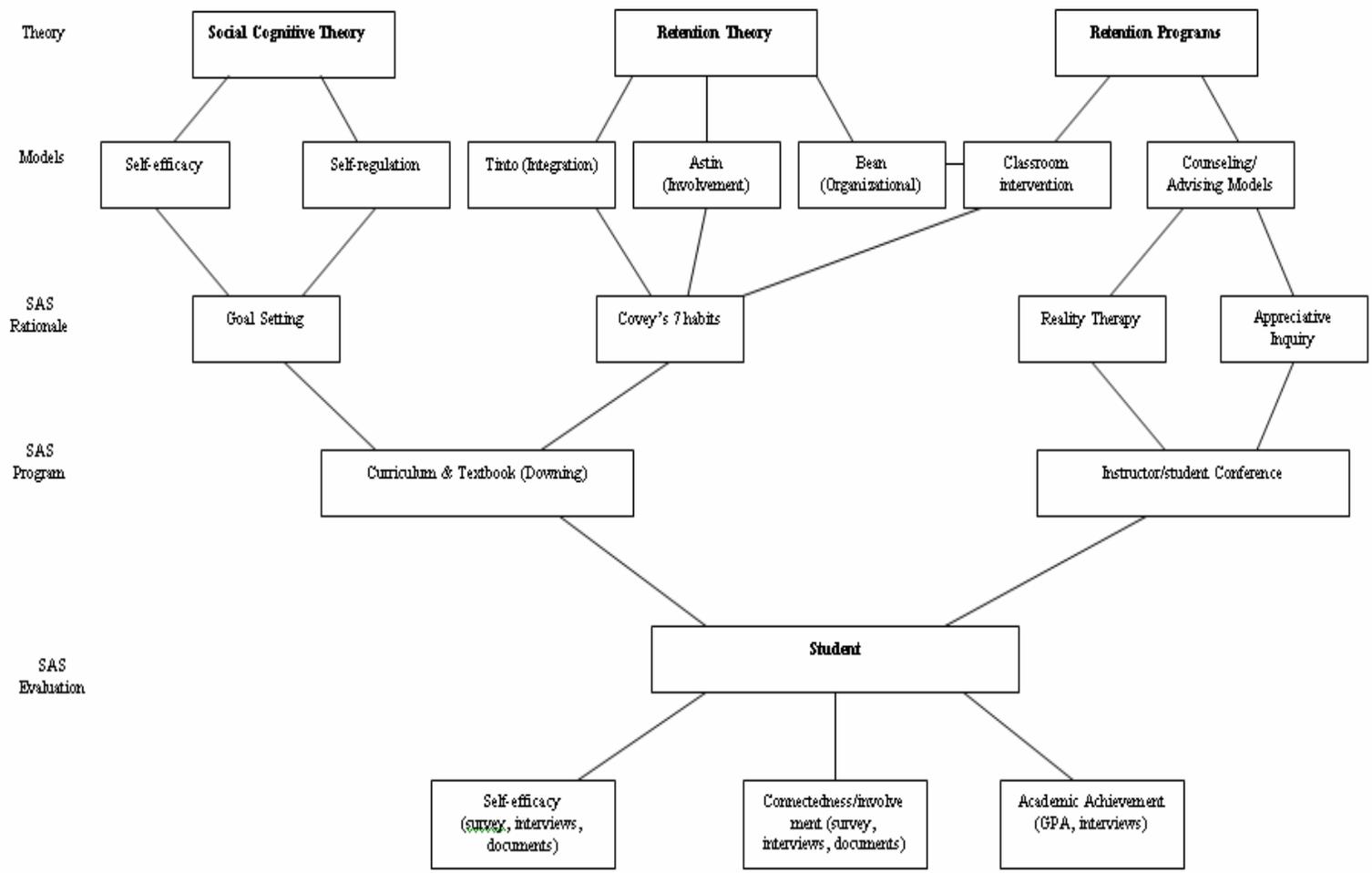


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework

While there is a dearth of comprehensive theoretical models outlining factors impacting at-risk students and strategies for facilitating recovery students on academic probation, theories concerning student learning, theories explaining student persistence, and models used in college student retention shed light on understanding this particular group of students and the strategies that may be used in aiding their academic improvement. In this chapter, the related theories are reviewed and their implications for probation student retention are discussed. Figure 2 provides an overview of the theoretical perspectives and their relationship with the SAS 100 program.

Student Learning Theories

The Sociocognitive Perspective

Rejecting behaviorist notions, learning theorists initially proposed views of social learning theories in favor of drive reduction principles. Bandura and Walters (1963) broadened the understanding of social learning theory with the principles of observational learning and vicarious reinforcement. Rejecting the behaviorists' indifference to self-processes, Bandura (1986) proposed a view of human functioning that emphasized the role of self-referent beliefs. In this sociocognitive perspective, individuals are viewed as proactive and self-regulating rather than as reactive and controlled by biological or environmental forces. Additionally, in this view, individuals are understood to possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Bandura provided a model of human behavior and motivation in which the beliefs that people have about their capabilities are critical elements.

According to Bandura, how people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities – that is, their “self-efficacy” beliefs – than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these self-perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have. Bandura (1997) further situated self-efficacy within a theory of personal and collective agency that operates in concert with other sociocognitive factors in regulating human well-being and attainment.

The focus on students’ self-beliefs as a principal component of academic motivations was grounded on the assumption that the beliefs that students create, develop, and hold to be true about themselves are vital forces in their academic success. Judgments of personal efficacy affect what students do by influencing the choices they make, the effort they expend, the persistence and perseverance they exert when obstacles arise, and the thought patterns and emotional reactions they experience (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1986) described *self-efficacy* as a mediating mechanism of personal agency, mediating between the prior influences that are the sources of its creation and subsequent behavior. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 391). Bandura and Wood (1989) expanded the definition of self-efficacy by adding that self-efficacy "refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands" (p. 408). Mitchell, Hopper, Daniels, George-Falvu, and James (1994) concluded that self-efficacy "clearly refers to what a person believes he or she can do on a particular task" (p. 506). Similarly, Gist and Mitchell (1992) noted that efficacy

judgments include motivational and integrative aspects. Mitchell et al. (1994) concluded "capability, although based heavily on ability, also reflects a forward-looking prediction of how hard one will work and an integration of both of these factors" (p. 506). In clarifying the relationship of self-efficacy and performance, perceptions of efficacy serve as a behavioral predictor (Bandura, 1986). Whereas individuals avoid tasks perceived as exceeding their capabilities, they undertake and perform successfully tasks they are capable of handling (Bandura, 1978). Bandura and Wood (1989) further concluded that individuals who demonstrate strong self-efficacy are more likely to undertake challenging tasks, persist longer, and perform more successfully than those with lower self-efficacy beliefs.

People form their self-efficacy perceptions by interpreting information from four sources. The most influential source is the interpreted result of one's performance, or mastery experience. Outcomes interpreted as successful raise self-efficacy; those interpreted as failures lower it. The second source of self-efficacy information is the vicarious experience individuals undergo when they observe others performing tasks. Part of one's vicarious experience involves the social comparisons made with other individuals. These comparisons, along with peer modeling, can be powerful influences on developing self-perceptions of competence. Individuals also develop self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the verbal messages and social persuasions they receive from others. Positive persuasions may work to encourage and empower; negative persuasions can work to defeat and weaken self-beliefs. Physiological states such as anxiety and stress also provide information about efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 1996).

During the two decades since Bandura first introduced the construct, the predictive and mediational role of self-efficacy has received extensive support from a growing body of findings from diverse fields. The depth of the support prompted Graham and Weiner (1996) to conclude that self-efficacy has proven to be a more consistent predictor of behavioral outcomes than have other self-beliefs. Self-efficacy has also received increasing attention in educational research, primarily in studies of academic motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 1995). In an area that is of particular importance for probation students, researchers have reported that students' self-efficacy beliefs are correlated with other motivation constructs and with students' academic performances and achievement (Pajares, 1996).

Perceived academic self-efficacy is defined as “personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated types of educational performances” (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 203). Studies of self-efficacy in academic settings have investigated the relationships among efficacy beliefs, related psychological constructs, and academic motivation and achievement (Pajares, 1996). Relationships among self-efficacy perceptions, self-efficacy for self-regulation, academic self-regulatory processes, and academic achievement have also been reported in the literature (Risemberg & Zimmerman, 1992; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Ringle, 1981). Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) used path analysis to demonstrate that academic self-efficacy mediated the influence of self-efficacy for self-regulated learning on academic achievement. According to their research, academic self-efficacy influenced achievement directly as well as indirectly by raising students' grade

goals. Other findings suggest those students who believe they are capable of performing academic tasks use more cognitive and metacognition strategies and persist longer than those who do not hold these beliefs (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991).

Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory posits that self-referent thought acts as a mediator between knowledge and action, and individuals evaluate their own experiences and thought processes through self-reflection. Building on Bandura's work, Pajares (1996) asserts that knowledge, skill, and prior achievement tend to be poor predictors of subsequent attainment because the beliefs that individuals hold about their abilities and about the outcomes of their efforts will powerfully predict their behavior. Although these researchers assert that the impact of personal motivation outweighs student knowledge, which may be debatable, the impact of self-beliefs cannot be overlooked. Individuals alter their environment and their self-beliefs by their interpretation of their performance attainments. For example, Covington (1992) describes how students frequently avoid expending effort in academic work because they have experienced failure in achieving an academic goal after making considerable effort to reach it, and have come to associate the combination of effort and failure with lack of ability. Consequently, they tend to develop strategies to avoid experiencing this sense of failure again. Often these strategies include task avoidance or setting goals that are too low or too high. Their interpretation of their experiences informs and alters their subsequent performance, and eventually impairs their potential as college students.

Much of the research into self-regulated learning has emphasized that students can activate and sustain the cognitions and behaviors that support achievement. A central

component of the SAS 100 program is to support students in becoming self-regulated learners who set effective goals, employ appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate the requirements of learning tasks adequately in order to achieve at improved levels. Self-regulated learners learn to accomplish academic goals strategically, manage to overcome obstacles using a battery of resources, and feel greater confidence in the decisions they have made (Randi and Corno, 2000). Improvement in self-efficacy also assists students in achieving improved life-planning skills regarding career choice (Pajares, 1996), financial management (Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda, 1992), and interpersonal skills (Bandura, 1997) – areas that are important elements of the SAS 100 curriculum.

Theories on Student Success

From the literature on sociocognitive theory, more specific theories describing student success and failure have emerged. *Learned drive theories*, *cognitive attribution theories*, *self-worth theories*, and *goal structures theories* may each offer partial explanations as to why college students reach academic probation status, and may be central to developing models for intervening with this student population.

Many researchers adhere to *learned drive theories*, which suggest that the need for achievement results from a conflict between striving for success, on one hand, and avoiding failure, on the other. Failure-avoiding college students may tend to select tasks that are either too easy or too difficult, thereby creating the very failures and poor record of achievement that they are attempting to avoid (Covington, 1992).

Cognitive attribution theories indicate that success-oriented and failure-avoiding individuals harbor different explanations for their successes and failures. According to

Weiner (1986), people motivated to pursue success tend to attribute their success to ability and their failures to lack of effort. In contrast, failure-avoiding students tend to ascribe success and failure to external factors such as luck. Whereas learned drive theories tend to emphasize that weak students may not have developed adequate ability to adjudicate their own competency levels in approaching tasks, cognitive attribution theories suggests that student perceptions of their ability to impact outcomes is the primary issue in understanding academic success.

The *self-worth theory* assumes that a central part of all classroom achievement is the need for students to protect their sense of worth or personal value (Covington, 1992). The basic assumption of this theory is that several factors influence a student's sense of worth, including performance level, self-estimates of ability, and the degree of effort expended. A student's sense of worth depends heavily on that student's accomplishments. The implication of this linkage is that unless students can become successful at some valued activity, they will be cut off from a major source of self-esteem.

Self-perception of ability has both a direct and an indirect influence on self-worth. The direct link demonstrates that the mere perception of high ability can sometimes imply worthiness, even without the presence of accomplishments. However, an individual's sense of worth cannot long rest solely on a reputation for intelligence. Therefore, the ability/performance/self-worth linkage indicates that a combination of ability and performance is necessary to maintain worthiness. Teachers tend to reinforce the concept that trying hard is a worthy activity, so there is a linkage for the student

between effort and self-worth. However, again, performance is needed to maintain this worthiness (Covington, 1992). This relationship is illustrated in Figure 3.

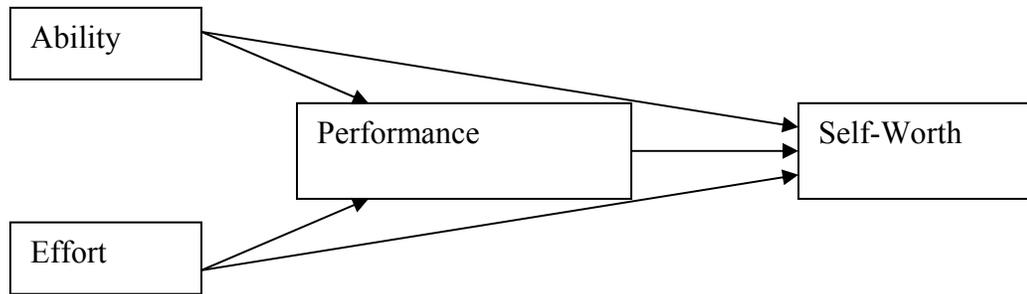


Figure 3. Covington's Self-worth Theory of Achievement Motivation

Goal structures theorists assert that cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures are situational factors that influence student motivation and achievement. A competitive structure promotes an egoistic or social comparative orientation, a cooperative structure elicits a moral orientation, and an individualistic structure evokes an achievement-mastery orientation” (Ames, 1984, p. 189).

The basis of a competitive system of motivation is that this system focuses students on their ability. “Winners” in the competition may exaggerate their ability, judging themselves smarter than their competitors, while “losers” evaluate themselves as incompetent. Therefore, winning becomes associated with public pride, competence, and confidence, while losing evokes public shame, embarrassment, and humiliation.

A cooperative structure is one in which the goals of separate individuals are shared. In a group, members work towards a common goal and receive common rewards for attainment or common punishment for non-attainment of goals. Since this is true,

helping others in the group is seen as desirable, since the achievement of the group will be judged holistically rather than individually. In this light, then, cooperation has a moral overtone. Helping or shared effort promotes positive interdependence among the group. Consequently, group work becomes a moral situation in which the focus for evaluation is on intent or how willing one is to put forth effort to meet the group goals (Ames, 1984).

In contrast, individualism implies an independence of goals, such that one individual's rewards are not dependent upon another's. Individual effort is directly linked to individual achievement. Therefore, the focus of behavior in this goal structure is towards achieving task mastery. In competitive structures, a determination of task difficulty involves a self-assessment of ability relative to the ability of others. However, in individualized settings, task difficulty evokes a determination of the amount of effort necessary to accomplish the task (Ames, 1984).

Ames (1984) suggests that varying the classroom environment by manipulating these goal structures will result in focusing student behavior toward ability or toward the task, thereby impacting student motivation. Ability-focused students are concerned with being judged "able" by outperforming others or by achieving success even when the task is easy. Those students focused on the task are concerned with understanding, insight, skill, and accomplishing something that is challenging.

The previous models emphasize the situations in which students may develop inaccurate understandings or perceptions as to their own academic abilities. Other studies provide specific illustrations of how low performing students exhibit inaccurate beliefs and perceptions as to their ability. For example, Goldman, Flake, and Matheson (1990)

found that low performing students tended to overestimate their high school and college GPAs and SAT scores, while higher performing students tended to estimate their high school and college GPAs and SAT scores more accurately.

Each of these models suggest that there are various avenues through which students may develop misleading beliefs about their ability to control academic outcomes that may negatively impact motivation and achievement. They also propose that by the time students come to college, they may also have the inability to accurately assess their own competence levels or be focused on unreasonable goals. These issues are central to SAS 100, as the program is designed to get beyond mere “study skills”, emphasizing interventions through which students examine their abilities, needs, and goals in an honest and significant manner.

Student Retention Theories

Types of Theories

Student retention research focuses on the forces that shape college student persistence. Tinto (1993) has categorized theories of student departure into five types: psychological, societal, economic, organizational, and interactional. Psychological models depict student departure as resulting from the personal attributes of the individual student. Societal theories of student departure are concerned with environmental perspectives, "those attributes of individuals, institutions, and society, such as social status, race, institutional prestige, and opportunity structures, that describe the person's and the institution's place in the broader social hierarchy of society" (Tinto, 1993, p. 362). Economic theories of student departure share the view that "individual decisions about

persistence are not different in substance from any other economic decision that weighs the costs and benefits of alternative ways of investing one's scarce economic resources" (Tinto, 1993, p. 363). Organizational theories of student departure see attrition as reflecting the impact that the organization has on the socialization and satisfaction of students. Variables studied within organizational theories include bureaucratic structure, size, faculty-student ratios, and institutional resources and goals.

Organizational theories are especially appealing to administrators because they focus on institutional attributes that are directly alterable by college staff. Bean's *Industrial Model of Student Attrition* (1985) is perhaps the most well known of these organizational theories. Developed from an industrial model of work turnover, this study looked at the impact of organizational attributes (such as routinization, participation, and communication) and rewards (e.g., grades, practical value, and development) on retention. Bean (1985) asserted that rates of retention would be improved by institutional policies that increase students' participation and enhance rewards they obtain for their "work" in the institution.

Interactional theories of student departure currently dominate retention research. These theories reflect an interactive view of student experience where a student's leaving reflects his or her experience in the total culture of the institution, including both its formal and the informal aspects. Rather than focusing on formal organization alone, these theories emphasize the role of informal social structures, such as student peer groups. Though individual attributes matter, their impact cannot be understood without reference

to the perceptions that different students have of events within the institution (Tinto, 1993).

An example of an interactional theory is Astin's *Theory of Involvement* (1993). Astin suggested that students learn more from involvement in both the academic and social aspects of the collegiate experience. An involved student is one who devotes considerable energy to academics, spends much time on campus, participates in student organizations and activities, and interacts frequently with faculty (Astin, 1993). This theory posits that the student plays an integral role in determining his or her own degree of involvement in college classes, extracurricular activities, and social activities. Of course, the more quality resources available, the more likely those involved students will experience development. Student interactions with faculty inside and outside the classroom, superior university programs, and policies reflective of commitment to student development are examples of efforts to support student growth.

Student Persistence and Departure Models

Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean's Student Attrition Model are the two main theoretical models of student persistence and departure. The Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1975, 1986, 1993, 1997) can be summarized as follows: The level of student's academic and social integration with the institution leads to "commitment to institutions and to personal goals associated with graduation and career" (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Interactions with faculty, though belonging to the domain of social integration, are also likely to enhance academic integration. When the role of pre-college

variables is included, the predictive validity of the Student Integration Model has been empirically supported (Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda, 1992).

Bean's (1980, 1982, 1985) Student Attrition Model, based on a model of worker turnover, was advanced as an alternative mode of student attrition (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993). This model includes five groups of variables: Background variables such as high school grades and parents' income; organizational variables such as close friends and grades; intent to leave; environmental variables such as the opportunity to transfer and the likelihood of marrying; and outcome and attitudinal variables such as institutional quality, satisfaction, and certainty of institutional choice. This model emphasizes the importance of intent to leave or stay as a predictor of persistence behavior (Cabrera et al., 1993). Empirical testing has supported the validity of the organizational, personal, and environmental variables of this model (Cabrera et al., 1993).

Cabrera et al. (1993) have closely examined Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean's Student Attrition Model and found that these models have many features in common. Commonalities of the two models are: persistence due to a complex set of interactions over time, the importance of the pre-college variables as a predictor of students' adjustment to the institution, and success as a function of fit between student and institution. However, unlike the Student Integration Model, the Student Attrition Model emphasizes the role of intent to persist and student attitudes toward college. The Student Attrition Model also focuses on how external factors such as family approval of one's institutional choice, friends, encouragement to continue enrollment, financial

attitudes, and perceptions about the opportunity to transfer to other institutions affect withdrawal decisions.

Cabrera et al. (1993) demonstrated that the integrated approach results in a better understanding of the persistence process. Cabrera further asserts that environmental factors are far more complex than the Student Attrition Model posited and that environmental factors affect academic factors as well as socialization experiences. The Student Integration Model, however, limited the role of environmental factors to shaping commitments. Recently, some researchers have suggested that Tinto's theory is partially supported but lacks empirical internal consistency. For example, Braxton (2000) suggests that researchers attempt to revise Tinto's approach or simply pursue new theoretical perspectives.

A problem with the leading models is that the issues of academic probation and attrition are not explicitly linked. As suggested in the discussion of theories of intelligence and motivation, several empirical studies have shown that previous academic achievement is positively related to persistence and graduation (Astin, 1975; Bean, 1980; Braxton & Brier, 1998; Nora, Attinasi & Matonak, 1990). Additionally, there is a strong positive relationship between dropout and one's college grade point average (Astin, 1975). Cabrea et al. (1993) found that one's university grade point average is the second most important factor – following intent to persist – in accounting for persistence.

The reasons for academic probation, unlike the reasons for leaving an institution, have not been explored carefully. It is likely that these students intended to persist, or

they would have withdrawn when they encountered academic trouble. They are choosing to stay engaged with the institution, but they face barriers to making progress.

Probation Student Retention Models

Although higher education institutions often provide academic advising to assist students in academic jeopardy (Metzner, 1989), traditional advising methods are unlikely to meet the complex needs of this group. As Trombley (1984) noted, the most common model of student advising has been the faculty-run model, which typically addresses only students' informational needs. Numerous authors have noted the common shortcomings of this approach (Dameron & Wolf, 1973; Gelwick, 1974; Glennen, 1976).

In light of findings that the provision of good academic advising is associated with increases in retention rates (Boyd, Carstens, Hunt, Hunt, McLaren, & Magoon, 1987; Glennen, 1976; Metzner, 1989; Newton, 1990; Young, Backer, & Rogers, 1989), many institutions have made efforts to improve their advising services. Some larger universities have developed distinct academic advising offices with specially trained staff. Other schools have implemented first-year seminar classes (Isakson & Call, 1991), extended first-year orientation programs (Young, Backer, Rogers, 1989), group advising (Gelwick, 1974; Newton, 1990), and peer advising (Isakson & Call, 1991). Similarly, Isakson and Call (1991) found that first-year students on academic warning who made contact with a professional academic advisor or with other academic support staff members showed greater improvement in GPA at the end of the semester than students on academic warning who did not make such contacts. Bland, Carstens, Hunt, Hunt, Leonard, Magoon, and McDevitt (1987) found that first-year students in academic

jeopardy who completed two diagnostic and prescriptive interviews with an academic support staff member were more likely to persist in good standing during the semester following treatment than were students in a control group. The relevance of such increases in student academic performance is supported by Metzner's (1989) finding that good advising primarily relates to retention through its correlation with higher student GPAs.

The need for comprehensive services for students on academic probation is supported by Thombs's (1995) finding that these students demonstrate a greater number of problem behaviors than do students in good academic standing, and that these students require a holistic, broad-based intervention approach that addresses academic, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

While institutions are pressured to assist probation students, there is limited understanding as to how to best support these students. Generally, many of the problems for which academic probation programs are trying to intervene involve attitudes and behaviors that are latent, and, therefore, the impact of the program is difficult to measure beyond GPAs and retention rates. Consequently, programs are frequently developed without clear notions as to what would be best for the institution's probation population. In the following section, some exemplars are reviewed from the myriad academic probation interventions that are in place across the United States.

Workshop/classroom Interventions

A number of institutions have adopted intervention programs that involve the use of regular classroom or workshop sessions. For example, at Kansas State University,

students on probation enroll in a 10-week seminar led by graduate students, in which topics such as student involvement, personal issues, skill building, and behavior change are explored. At Long Beach City College (California), the Students and Teachers Achieving Results (STAR) program emphasizes making connections among classes, with students forming cohorts and participating together in a series of related coursework (Mackay, 1996). Cooper and Robinson (1987), two University of Missouri-Rolla researchers, describe an effective use of academic support groups for students on probation, with a focus on specific study and personal skills. Both the University of Iowa and the University of Kentucky offer a limited number of academic support courses for probation students, but attendance in these courses is voluntary (Corkery, McGreevey, Yoder, & Folsom, 2003; Shanks, 2003). In addition, Brocato (2000) describes the effective use of workshops for academic probation students at the University of Southern California.

Workshop/classroom intervention programs can be effective in that they provide opportunities for students to interact with peers and with faculty or staff at their university, an approach that is supported by Astin's *Theory of Involvement* (1993). This approach to intervention may also assist students in feeling connected to campus by meeting with a group of peers who are in similar circumstances, which Tinto (1993) asserts is a key to student retention. However, these workshop/classroom interventions often lack substantial support for students once they leave the classroom. The focus of the workshop or classroom coursework is typically on the improvement of student study skills, and there are rarely opportunities to assist students in structured examination of

their individual goals and concerns. Additionally, these workshop/classroom programs often have no formal mechanism for connecting students with individual staff members or faculty.

Counseling/Advising Interventions

A number of schools have adopted interventions involving counseling or advising sessions for probation students. At Bronx Community College, students on academic probation meet with peers to work out a plan for getting off probation (Finklestien, 2002). Kriner and Shriberg (1992) describe an approach at Xavier (Ohio) University in which students on probation were contacted to voluntarily participate in person-to-person sessions with counselors. At Ohio University, the ExCEL program matches students on academic probation with peer advisors who assist individually in developing goals and time management plans (Ting, Grant, & Plenert, 2000).

Currently, Michigan State University's S.T.E.P. (Supportive Training to Enhance Performance) is a semester-long program whereby students meet biweekly with S.T.E.P. advisors, develop and agree to an Academic Success Plan, and engage in assignments for improving goal setting, study skills, time management, and other topics. Similarly, the Academic Reform Contract used at the College of Business, Iowa State University, requires that in order to be reinstated to the College, the student must meet five out of 10 requirements listed on a contract. The students work with an advisor to identify the five requirements that would be most appropriate for their case. The list includes items such as "visiting an advisor once a month", "minimizing work hours", "engaging in Supplemental Instruction", and "using a tutor." LEAP at Kent State University involves

the Student Advising Center staff members meeting students face-to-face, making recommendations to students about adjusting their academic schedule, holding an orientation for students about various student services, and maintaining communication with faculty members about student progress (Pionke, Coppernoll, Austin, Pitocchi, Reynolds, 2004).

These are just a few examples of the advising/counseling interventions used to assist probation students. While they do not provide structured opportunities for students to interact with a group of peers, they do permit students to feel connected to at least one person on campus. They also allow support personnel to tailor their efforts to meet individual students' needs. However, these programs tend to lack the connecting of individual students with peers and other support groups across campus.

Combined Models

While the practice is less common, a few institutions attempt to combine the workshop/classroom and advising/counseling approaches. The Academic Choices and Transitions (ACT) program at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville is primarily a study skills course intervention, although the program requires students to meet with their faculty mentor at least three times during the semester (Martino & DeClue, 2003). The Academic Counseling program at Johnson and Wales University requires that probation students meet with an academic counselor every two weeks over the course of the term. An academic agreement is developed where the academic goals and requirements for the student are identified. There are study skills workshops with voluntary attendance, but students may be required to use specific resources, such as tutoring services (Pionke et

al., 2004). Strategies for Academic Success at California State University, Long Beach is a "two-step" program: 1) Students attend a 90 minute workshop covering topics such as selecting a major, managing academic load, using campus services, understanding school policies, and analyzing academic performance; and 2) students have a follow-up appointment with their major advisor or a representative from a campus service (Pionke et al., 2004).

While both classroom/workshop and advising/counseling intervention models have varying degrees of success, they rarely use the theoretical orientations for explaining student achievement and success discussed here. Further, there is seldom an effort to bundle both advising/counseling and classroom/workshop intervention methods in assisting the same group of students. Typically, the impact of the intervention is evaluated by a count of students who remain enrolled for the next academic period, rather than also including changes in student attitudes, aspirations, or abilities.

The SAS 100 Model

This study describes a unique model, referred to as the *motivational/empowerment model* by the Student Academic Services staff, at the University of North Carolina - Greensboro that has been exceptionally successful in assisting probation students. UNCG's Strategies for Academic Success (SAS 100) program is based on theoretical orientations proposed in *Reality Therapy* (Glasser, 2000), *Appreciative Inquiry* (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003), *Social Cognitive Theory* (Bandura, 1997), and Covey's (1989) models for personal success. The strategy uses an integrated model of advising/counseling and classroom/workshop approaches. The strategy attempts

to go beyond the emphasis on study skills and other techniques through which students may make short-term gains, and requires students to work with instructors and peers to carefully examine their behaviors and goals in order to make effective long-term plans for personal success. In the following section, the ideas drawn from Reality Therapy, Appreciative Inquiry, Social Cognitive Theory, and Covey's "habits" for personal success that inform the SAS 100 motivational/empowerment model are described.

Covey's Seven Habits

Reflecting the principles of sociocognitive theory, Covey (1989) wrote *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* based upon interviews with successful individuals and reviewing the literature on personal success. Covey concluded that seven basic principles helped to guide the behavior of successful individuals. In the book, Covey details seven habits that bridge the private and public domains, and focuses on changes that an individual can make within his or her "Circle of Influence" – the areas within one's life over which he or she has control. The seven principles included: 1). *Be proactive*; 2). *Begin with the end in mind*; 3). *Put first things first*; 4). *Think win-win*; 5). *Seek first to understand, then to be understood*; 6). *Synergize*; and 7). *Sharpen the saw*.

While the "Seven Habits" are frequently criticized for lack of rigorous supporting research (English, 2002; Jackson, 1999), the methods described in the approach have been found by higher education institutions to be a practical and simple way to improve organizational and individual performance (Birrell, Ostlund, Eagan, Young, Cook, DeWitt, Tibbitts, 1998; O'Brien, Grace, Williams, Paradise, Gibbs, 2003; Starck, 1995). While the overall merit of the "seven habits" continues to be debated, the model is useful

for an academic support class in that it introduces several important personal development themes for discussion in a systematic and easily accessible manner.

When models for individual change were under consideration for inclusion in the SAS 100 curriculum, Covey's work was appealing because of the ease with which the model could be adapted to the course and its emphasis on taking personal responsibility for behavior and outcomes. Downing's (2002) *On Course*, a text typically used for "university studies" or "freshmen orientation" classes, was initially used as a textbook for the course because it was modeled after Covey's approach.

Covey's research involved interviewing a number of individuals who were considered "successful" by Covey's criteria. This research has been continued by Covey and associates since the mid-1980s, and appears to be tested successfully in business organizations (Covey, 1999; Oncken, Wass, Covey, 1999) and in higher education environments (Birrell, Ostlund, Eagan, Young, Cook, DeWitt, Tibbitts, 1998; O'Brien, Grace, Williams, Paradise, Gibbs, 2003; Starck, 1995). However, while the model is often used in student academic support programs, the effectiveness of the model in these programs has not been explored. Given the centrality of Covey's model to SAS 100, this study explored the validity of the model for student academic support services.

Covey (1989) begins with the first habit necessary for change and impact — *proactivity*. He describes this as recognizing our responsibility to make things happen by using resourcefulness and initiative. The author, however, makes one important distinction between proactivity and positive thinking. When individuals are proactive, they face reality squarely and do not deny the negative features of a situation. However,

proactive people also accept that they have the power to choose a positive reaction to that situation. From this power comes one's Circle of Influence, that area of one's life over which they have control. Proactive people focus their efforts on this Circle of Influence. Conversely, people influenced more by conditions around them rather than by personal principles tend to be reactive. Statements like "He made me mad" or "The professor gave me this poor grade" reveal reactive behavior, the perception that one's personal welfare and emotional health are at the mercy of conditions outside one's control. Proactive people have three very important characteristics: They respond to situations according to their values, accept responsibility for their own behavior, and focus on their "circle of influence" (Covey, 1989).

The *proactivity habit*, in practice, reflects the same principles as Reality Therapy, and appears to be based on the same theoretical orientation. While the theory behind Covey "proactivity" may not be adequate, it reinforces the emphasis on Reality Therapy that is central to the SAS 100 model.

In the SAS 100 curriculum, the habit of proactivity is explored through several areas of discussion. A primary theme is that successful students are "creators" who accept self-responsibility, seeing themselves as the primary cause of their outcomes and experiences, while struggling students see themselves as "victims", believing that what happens to them is determined primarily by external forces such as fate, luck, and other individuals who are perceived as having power over them. Activities revolve around discussions of using "creator" over "victim" language, challenging negative and defeatist

thinking, recognizing and understanding the choices one can make, and identifying lifetime goals and making operational, well-defined plans to accomplish them.

The second habit, *begin with the end in mind*, is based on the principle that all things are created twice — first as a mental picture and then as reality. Metaphorically, habit one suggests that people are “the programmers” and habit two suggests that people must write their own “programs” (Covey, 1989). In application, this habit involves developing a personal mission statement that includes goals for every role in which one might find him/herself. The mission statement itself serves a valuable purpose. By focusing on the destination or results, an individual may keep daily circumstances in perspective.

While there is a literature that strongly supports the usefulness of visualization in improving outcomes and achieving goals (Cifuentes, 1992; Finke, 1990), Covey’s suggestion to make the intentions more concrete by writing them out is particularly useful with probation students who may have poorly-defined and unrealistic personal and academic goals. In the SAS 100 curriculum, activities and assignments emphasize visualizing and writing out ideal future goals and dreams, prioritizing goals, and making plans to achieve them. Discussions revolve around how successful students discover self-motivation, finding purpose in their lives by discovering personally meaningful goals and outcomes. Students who struggle, conversely, have difficulty sustaining motivation, and often feel depressed, frustrated, and resentful about a lack of direction in their lives.

The third habit – *put first things first* – is the practical fulfillment of the first two, which encourages individuals to take charge of their lives and then to imagine the results.

Habit three is the physical creation of the imagined reality from habit two. Covey discusses a time management matrix that cross-matches activities that are urgent or not urgent and important or not important, as illustrated in Figure 1. He explains that effective people spend most of their time and effort on activities that are important but not urgent — in other words, in the realms of prevention, relationships, new opportunities, planning, and recreation. He stresses that most people react to urgent matters; proactive people take the initiative on matters that are important and will influence their mission. Finally, effective people stay completely away from matters that are unimportant.

In the SAS 100 curriculum, it is emphasized that successful students master self-management, consistently planning and taking purposeful actions in pursuit of their goals. Conversely, struggling students seldom identify specific actions needed to accomplish a desired outcome, and when they do, they tend to procrastinate.

Covey suggests that these first three habits represent the “personal victory” that comes with effective personal management. Other areas covered in the SAS 100 curriculum reinforce this message. Discussions in the class center around *gaining self-awareness* (i.e., consciously employing behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that keep them on course in pursuing their plans and dreams), and *adopting life-long learning* (e.g., finding valuable lessons and wisdom in nearly every experience they have). The remaining four habits involve what Covey describes as *interdependence*, or how the effective person works and lives with others.

The habit of *think win-win* suggests that individuals should strive for mutual benefit in all interdependent relationships, and that more could be accomplished by working together than independently, given differing individual strengths. Covey distinguishes this as an alternative from the concept of compromise, which implies a less effective solution. Instead, win/win means pooling energies to develop an innovative, more effective plan of action. In the SAS 100 course, students are encouraged to develop relationships with faculty and other students in order to build sustainable, viable social networks.

Habit five – *seek first to understand, then to be understood* – relies heavily on empathic listening skills, where individuals seek to understand one another before seeking to be understood. When two individuals with differing or conflicting needs or opinions are seeking only to be understood, neither individual is seeking to understand. In that situation, empathic listening skills are not easily developed. The person using this important skill must listen nonjudgmentally and avoid the tendency to probe, analyze, evaluate, and interpret. By taking the time to understand another person's perspective completely, an individual builds the trust and openness that is necessary for real communication and problem solving to occur. This skill is of importance for SAS 100 students, who are often confused or make assumptions about what is expected from them as students. Frequently, these students have not established congenial relationships with faculty, staff, or other students. The emphasis on communication has become a key component of the SAS 100 course.

Synergy is the catalytic, empowering, and unifying energy that occurs when a group of people has combined their effort to solve a problem or to create something new. It includes an appreciation of the diverse talents and experiences that people have. Students in the SAS 100 class are asked to review their experience in using the previous two habits – *think win-win* and *seek first to understand, then to be understood* – and discuss whether these techniques have created situations in which several people, including themselves, were able to benefit.

In the SAS 100 curriculum *employing interdependence*, building mutually supportive relationships that help them achieve their goals and dreams, while helping others to do the same, is a key component. This tends to be the most significant portion of the class, as the theme deals with those issues of connectedness and involvement that Tinto (1993) and Astin (1993) have identified as central to college student retention. In the pilot of the pre- and post- survey used in this study, many students indicated that before enrolling in SAS 100, they did not belong to study groups, have strong relationships on campus, or even had conversations with or request help from faculty members outside of class. Based on the feedback of students who have been enrolled in this program, those portions of the curriculum that deal with interdependence provided some of the most useful information for improving their academic status.

The last habit – *Sharpen the saw* – is that of renewal. It helps ensure the energy and continued commitment to being an effective person. Habit seven involves the individual engaging in self-maintenance in four domains: physical, mental, spiritual, and social. Covey (1989) suggests that weekly renewal in the physical realm includes

exercise, nutrition, and stress management. Through this effort, an individual is able to feel well and function in a consistent manner. Renewal in the mental realm includes reading, visualizing, planning, and writing. These activities sharpen the mind and keep an individual well informed and in a reflective mode. Spiritual renewal is also essential and may include value clarification and commitment, study, and meditation. Activities in this realm allow an individual to draw upon his or her inner strength repeatedly. Finally, social renewal includes service, empathy, synergy, and intrinsic security. Being of service to others and taking the time to understand them allows individuals to step outside themselves to view the world from a different perspective. These activities often result in a better appreciation of their own personal situation.

This final habit may appear to be the most difficult to adapt for the SAS 100 curriculum. However, over time the SAS 100 program has come to emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence, in the sense of assisting students in effectively managing their emotions in support of their goals, rather than living at the mercy of strong emotions such as anger, depression, anxiety, or a need for instant gratification. This is actually a central issue in that students on academic probation tend to express anger, resentment, or discouragement because of their status and tend to place blame on the institution or individual faculty members. While the SAS 100 class itself cannot require that students engage in improved emotional behavior, discussing with students such issues as reviewing goals, establishing methods of pacing themselves, and maintaining good health is among the typical SAS 100 activities.

The concepts presented by Covey (1989) provided a useful framework for thinking about change. While the research base supporting Covey's model is limited, the components reflect theoretical orientations that are more established. Two areas in particular that Covey's principles reflect – Reality Therapy and Appreciative Inquiry – are considered important components of the SAS 100 approach, and are described in detail in the sections that follow.

Reality Therapy

Reality Therapy is a method of counseling which teaches people how to direct their own lives, make more effective choices, and develop the strength to handle the stresses and problems of life. At the core of Reality Therapy is the idea that regardless of what has "happened" in our lives, or what we have done in the past, we can choose behaviors that will help us meet our needs more effectively in the future (Glasser, 2000).

Choice Theory provides the concepts that drive Reality Therapy. As an "Internal Control Psychology," this holds that each individual is controlled from within by his or her own basic needs and not by external stimuli. Individuals have their own personal ways of meeting their needs and choose behavior according to these templates. They choose according to their own perceptions and since these are in the present, explorations of the past become less important. Even when individuals sometimes generate behavior that others label as bizarre or crazy, Glasser (1986, 2000) contends they are choosing this behavior as their best attempt at the time of meeting their needs. The delinquent or despondent student is choosing the best strategy he or she knows at the time to keep some sort of balance in life.

Behavior in Glasser's view is a totality of four inseparable components: acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology. If one is "feeling" very low or one's "physiology" is in an unhealthy state, one can still choose to change the more accessible components of one's behavior – acting or thinking – and so improve their situation.

Reality Therapy gives great importance to the relationship with the student. Glasser calls this "involvement." Typically, the counselor will explore the student's repertoire of ways of meeting his or her needs, and will be sensitive to information about the overall need satisfaction the student is experiencing.

In the SAS 100 program, there is a very strong emphasis on helping students evaluate their own current behavior. For example, an SAS 100 instructor may meet with a student to discuss a typical week with him or her, looking at studies, part-time jobs, athletics training, and other obligations. They would then establish goals for the short-term that will improve the student's situation. The instructor may ask, "Do you think you can make real changes to your grades if you continue to choose the same weekly timetable?" If the student answers negatively, the instructor may ask the student to examine other ways to plan his/her week. Central to this process is that the students do their own thinking and evaluating.

In the face-to-face meetings, in addition to the emphasis on Appreciative Inquiry that is described later, the steps of Reality Therapy are considered: 1) *Involvement* - the facilitator must establish an authentic relationship with the student, and they must relate in an open and genuine way. 2) *Present behavior* – the instructor must deal only with current issues; they should not analyze the past or the reasons that the student adopted

their present forms of behavior. In addition, the instructor should generally deal with behavior rather than discuss feelings at length. 3) *Exploring behavior* - the instructor assists the student in making a value judgment on his or her own behavior; students must decide whether they want to change the way they are living. 4) *Positive plan of action* – the instructor should then help the student set goals and define plans for attaining those goals. The plans should be systematically described in detail. 5) *Commitment* – the student must commit themselves to the plans. They must take responsibility for their own actions. Making plans that are contingent on others' behavior is not acceptable. 6) *No excuses* - if the student does not fulfill their commitments, the facilitator simply ignores excuses and helps the student make other plans. 7) *No punishment* - the instructor does not punish students with verbal threats or sarcasm. If the student has not carried out their plans, the instructor must go back to the appropriate earlier step (Glasser, 1986, 2000).

SAS 100 instructors have varying levels of experience, and are not required to be counselors or psychologists. Typically, there is an attempt to recruit instructors who are training to be counselors or who have advising, teaching, or coaching experience. SAS 100 instructors also receive training from experienced SAS 100 instructors and Enrollment Services staff before the classes begin. However, they have no authority over the students outside of being instructors, and if students are experiencing substantial difficulties, such as mental instability or severe personal problems, they turn the case over to the Student Academic Services staff for referral. Reality Therapy as used here is a tool for helping students identify areas in which they make changes, and is not intended to authorize SAS 100 instructors to diagnose student problems.

Additionally, this approach is combined with the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a communication approach that emphasizes identifying and building upon strengths. While Reality Therapy assists the student in developing plans of actions, Appreciative Inquiry is useful in identifying those strengths with which the student may pursue the plans.

Appreciative Inquiry

Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) define Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of how a system is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. Appreciative Inquiry involves the practice of asking questions that identify and strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through constructing "unconditional positive questions" that focus on what works as it influences the way in which people perceive themselves.

When a student questions a long held assumption and realizes that it may not be true, they understand that they have power over their own future. Other assumptions begin to be challenged, and images of the future emerge that previously seemed impossible. This is a significant concern in dealing with students at UNC-Greensboro. At an open-enrollment institution, students often come in with academic deficits that the institution intends to assist in improving; however, selective institutions have identified enrolled students as being capable of success and completing their degree, and under this assumption have invested resources in these students' efforts. This suggests that starting from a deficit-based paradigm, (i.e., looking for areas of academic weakness or poor time

management) may not be an adequate starting point, since students should already have adequate preparation in these areas prior to matriculating. Additionally, students on academic probation typically have a very limited time in which to correct their status – usually a semester. Practically, it is quicker to correct this status by building on strengths, and maintaining a course load and engaging in academic and social behaviors that reflect these strengths, than it is to attempt to correct long-standing deficits in a short period of time. In the SAS 100 curriculum, Appreciative Inquiry is particularly useful in that it assists students in recovering in the short term, while other components of the course are designed to assist students in developing approaches to correcting areas of deficit over the long term.

Cooperrider and Srivastva's (1987) position may be summarized as follows: For action-research to reach its potential as a vehicle for social innovation it needs to begin advancing theoretical knowledge of consequence; good theory may be one of the best means people have for affecting change in a postindustrial world; the discipline's steadfast commitment to a problem-solving view of the world acts as a primary constraint on its imagination and contribution to knowledge; appreciative inquiry represents a viable complement to conventional forms of action research; and finally, through our assumptions and choice of method we largely create the world we later discover.

Initially an organizational psychology model, Cooperrider's (1990) *theory of affirmation* contends that comprehending an organization requires an understanding of the dynamic of the positive image as well as of the processes through which isolated images become interlocked, and how nascent affirmations become guiding principles.

Virtually any pattern of organizational action is open to alteration and reconfiguration, and cannot be improved automatically by nature in any blind determinist way, whether biological, behavioral, technological, or environmental. To the extent that organizations' imaginative projections are the key to their current conduct, organizations are free to seek transformations in conventional practice by replacing conventional images with images of a better future. Organizations are "heliotropic" in character in the sense that organizational actions have an observable tendency to evolve in the direction of positive imagery. To understand organizations in affirmative terms is also to understand that the greatest obstacle in the way of group and organizational health is the lack of a positive image, the affirmative projection that guides the group or the organization. Organizations need constant reaffirmation. Every new affirmative projection of the future is a consequence of an appreciative understanding of the past or the present.

There are a number of ways in which to conduct an appreciative inquiry, but the processes all tend to follow a common path of four phases: Discovery (conducting appreciative interviews and identifying strengths and positive attitudes), Dream (developing propositions for the future), Design (integrating wishes for the future with plans for needed changes to structure, systems, and processes) and Destiny (making it happen and making it sustainable over time). Additionally, the importance of engaging in person-to-person dialogue to identify personal strengths and visions has become increasingly important to the approach (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000). In the SAS 100 program, this approach reinforces and builds upon the Reality Therapy model.

In the first face-to-face discussion that takes place during SAS 100, the instructor begins the conversation by asking questions of the student that leads to them providing a narrative in which they describe their best academic performance. The instructor then continues questioning until the student is able to independently articulate the personal strengths that helped them perform at their best, and how they identified and employed resources and people who could help them achieve this success. Not only does this give the instructor and the student insight into areas in which the student excels, it can be a powerful experience for the student to recall the attributes that made them exceptional students initially. Frequently, they are reminded of what motivated them to go to college and why family and teachers supported them to do so. This initial conversation triggers the basis for recovery. The second face-to-face discussion tends to reflect the Reality Therapy model, in which the instructor and student examine more specifically the student's activities and efforts to change, and discuss plans to build upon them.

There is an intentional positive focus in an Appreciative Inquiry interview. There is reliance on storytelling in responding to the questions. Inherent in telling stories, specifically stories about oneself and one's experiences, is revealing oneself to the other, and thus making oneself vulnerable. This self-disclosure, and the vulnerability that it creates, form the basis of trust between the two individuals and the beginning of an interpersonal bond and relationship. Thus, the Appreciative Inquiry interview has an inherent relationship-building, trust-building, connective capacity. Finally, the acts of remembering and retelling influence the present reality. In the process of inquiry, the

speaking and listening that each participant brings to the process shapes the present views of what is current and what is possible (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000).

In summary, the dynamic of an AI interview has four unique characteristics in comparison to more traditional forms of inquiry. AI creates a focus on the positive, on what is working and what enables the best to emerge. AI involves creating and relating detailed stories that, in the telling, influence how past events are re-experienced. AI has the capacity to build connections and relationships where none may have existed before. It enables a sense of unity and common ground. Finally, because AI interviews are specific forms of social discourse, they are meaning-making and reality-creating. How individuals view themselves, their colleagues, and their organizations has the capacity to be transformed by the experience of the AI interview (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000).

Appreciative Inquiry has become increasingly popular as a social constructionist approach to organizational and personal change and development (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). Given its social constructionist context, however, measuring its impact can be a challenge, and the vast majority of the substantial literature on AI involves case studies. However, unlike Covey's models, there have been attempts to develop rigorous quantitative studies for measuring the impact of Appreciative Inquiry. For example, one of Bryk's first applications of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) involved an examination of the application of AI across several parochial schools in Chicago, with results that supported the usefulness of the approach (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). Additional studies involving large organizations such as the United States Postal Service in Wisconsin (Head, 2000), a fast-food chain, (Jones, 1998), and a higher education

institution (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995) successfully used quantitative designs to measure the impact of the technique. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2001) have conducted a study in which 1000 employees engaged in the AI interview process, with statistically significant improvements in a number of employee attributes and performance outcomes.

Motivational/Empowerment Model in SAS 100

Based on the theoretical orientations described above, the SAS 100 course uses an integrated model of advising/counseling and classroom/workshop approaches.

First, the motivational/empowerment model is implemented in SAS 100 using a prescribed curriculum emphasizing the model for personal success espoused by Covey described above. This content, adapted to the post-secondary academic context, provides the foundation of the classroom/workshop approach.

Second, group interaction between students is encouraged both in class and outside class. The group of students interacts in a small group setting (a maximum of ten students in each section) where reflection and self-disclosure occur regularly. Students are encouraged and guided to share their experiences with each other while other students provide support and guidance. A supportive environment is created for students to relate to other students in a similar academic situation. This approach bridges the classroom/workshop component of the course with the advising/counseling component.

Third, each student is required to meet with his or her SAS 100 instructor twice during the eight weeks of the course. The reasons the students believe contributed to their poor academic performance, their current grades for the term, and their plan for restoring academic standing are discussed at individual meetings. This component adapts Glasser's

Reality Therapy model, combined with the Appreciative Inquiry method of dialogue, to help each student recognize areas of weakness and strength and to develop action plans.

By engaging in the class activities and in the face-to-face discussions with the instructor, each student is able to construct a profile for academic recovery, which includes well-defined, operationalized personal goals, an understanding of their strengths and needs as students, and a plan for using this information to recover academically.

Studies in Student Retention Programs

Various retention programs have been applied to different university settings in order to help improve the retention rate of first-year college students, yet rigorous studies of student retention programs are far less in number. Even though some colleges attempt to measure the effectiveness of their retention programs, student retention rates and end-of-term GPAs are typically the only measures used in such studies, while students' personal growth is often ignored. For example, Merisotis and Phipps (2000) found that research about the effectiveness of remedial education programs has typically been sporadic, underfunded, and inconclusive, and a study of 116 two- and four-year colleges and universities revealed that only a small percentage conducted any systematic evaluation of their remedial education programs (Weissman, Bulakowski, & Jumisco, 1997).

Similarly, there does not seem to be a meta-analysis of the research into or the evaluations of academic probation programs specifically, and only a few studies of individual probation programs have been published. The Noel-Levitz website (Noel-Levitz, 2004) has a list of retention programs receiving Noel-Levitz citations for

excellence. Many include study skills programs, academic tutoring, peer mentoring, academic advising, and various forms of academic support for individuals or groups identified as having, or being at risk for having, academic difficulty. Some of the brief descriptions include reports of increased retention for targeted students, but the impact of individual components of the programs is not separated out. For example, the retention program at Centennial College (Canada) includes improved pre-admission information, “success” workshops for high school students, improved orientation, more study skills workshops for probation students, and an “early warning system” based on questionnaires to new students to identify those who are in early academic difficulty (Centennial College, 2004). The program is reported as having increased recruitment 6%, having increased the number of students getting GPAs higher than 3.0 by 12%, and having improved retention, but the impact of various programming components on different student populations is not clarified.

Mount Saint Vincent University’s “Student Success” program, involves an expanded study skills group program along with group discussion of related issues (e.g. career and educational planning), which is mandatory for students on academic probation. In this study, it was found that the program has not decreased academic dismissal rates, but has reduced voluntary withdrawals among students who take the program and who successfully get off probation (Fancey, 2000).

Students’ previous GPA, which reflects academic achievement, is considered a strong predictor of student success (Tinto, 1993). However, other factors such as students’ social behavior and their self-knowledge are seldom considered in the study of

retention programs. With students' previous academic achievement already in place, the improvement of students' personal growth is believed to have a strong impact on their future achievement. Goldman and Gillis (1989) found that first semester grade point average was a predictor of persistence to graduation, i.e., the lower the first semester GPA, the less likely that graduation will occur within five years. This finding suggests that first semester GPA may be an early warning to identifying students who are at-risk for attrition. Similarly, earlier studies by Johansson and Rossman (1973), Brigham and Jacobs (1979), and Young (1982) found that first-semester GPA was a strong indicator for persistence.

Goldman and Gillis (1989) and Goldman and Flake (1996) found that *flexibility* – that is, being “capable of responding or conforming to changing or new situations” (Goldman and Flake, 1996, p. 37) – was key to understanding student persistence. These studies found that when students were tracked over five years, those students who were able to move between full-time and part-time enrollment status, who changed majors, or who changed their living arrangements while enrolled actually had a greater probability of graduation after five years than those who did not exhibit such flexibility. While enrolled in SAS 100, students are coached through making action plans to improve their academic situation and to reach their personal and professional goals. These plans often involve adjusting course loads, changing majors, and establishing new study and work schedules. Probation students often resist these changes because of their fear of not graduating. The findings of Goldman and Gillis (1989) support the argument that making adjustments in course loads and majors will not reduce the likelihood of graduation, and

illustrate the importance of assisting students in developing flexibility in forming strategies for persisting to graduation.

The SAS 100 model was created with the postulation that at the university level, where admissions tend to be selective, both the institution and the student have expected that the student will perform successfully academically. When students go on academic probation, it suggests that something has gone wrong in the system, and that a simple “remediation” or “study-skills” approach may not be adequate. Consequently, a number of theoretical perspectives have been applied in developing and implementing the SAS 100 model in an effort to assure it meets the needs of a diverse range of students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the SAS 100 program on students' self-efficacy and academic achievement. The population under study consisted of students who were placed on academic probation and who were required to enroll in the SAS 100 program at UNCG. This chapter presents a detailed research design and description of the research methods and procedures for gathering and analyzing multiple data. First, the overall design of the study is described. Then, general and specific research questions are outlined. Data collection and analysis procedures are discussed in relation to the specific research questions. Finally, a discussion of the validity, reliability, objectivity, and ethical issues of the research design is provided.

Research Design

A combined research methodology was used within this study, employing a qualitative framework and both qualitative and quantitative methods. It was the researcher's proposition that in order to best understand the SAS 100 program with all of its complexities, and its impact on student retention, a combined framework of inquiry would facilitate development of a more complete understanding of the program than would either a purely quantitative or qualitative approach (Newman & Benz, 1998). Underlying both paradigms was a similarity in fundamental values: a "belief in the value-

laden-ness of inquiry, belief in the theory-laden-ness of facts, belief that reality is multiple and constructed, belief in the fallibility of knowledge, and belief in the under-determination of theory by fact” (Tashakkori & Teddie, 1998, p. 13).

The advantages of a mixed methodology were apparent. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods provided the opportunity to learn the “why” and “how” behind student comments and survey responses. In addition to enabling the researcher to triangulate findings, the use of a combination of methods also allowed the researcher to “demonstrate convergence in results...examine overlapping and different facets in order to examine contradictions and new perspectives and to add scope to a study” (Cresswell, 1994, p.189).

In developing the study design, the SAS 100 program was viewed as having a distinct culture with values, behaviors, and meanings that could only be understood through “the lens of the environmental context in which its participants experienced it.” In its broadest interpretation, culture refers to “...all that humans learn, in contrast to that which is genetically endowed” (Keesing & Keesing, 1971, p. 20). What is learned is divided into patterns *of* behavior and patterns *for* behavior. Patterns of behavior are observable and frequently are referred to as social structure or social organization (Keesing & Keesing, 1971). Patterns for behavior are seen as mentalistic phenomena, systems of “standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it” (Goodenough, 1981, pp. 21-22). Culture is also used to refer to both patterns of behavior and patterns for behavior (Goodenough, 1981).

The study of the SAS 100 program was an exploratory research utilizing a qualitative frame of inquiry through a process of inductive reasoning to build an understanding of the program and its role in retaining students.

Qualitative methods share several assumptions: 1) a holistic view that seeks to understand phenomena in their entirety in order to develop a complete understanding of a person, program, or situation; 2) an inductive approach in which the researcher does not make assumptions about the interrelationships among the data prior to making the observations; and 3) naturalistic inquiry, a discovery-oriented approach in the natural environment (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). It was believed that a qualitative framework of inquiry would better allow for the emergence of patterns and was better suited to facilitating an understanding of the program using the experiences and voices of the participants as data.

Although a qualitative framework was better suited to construct an experientially-based understanding of the SAS 100 program, the broader policy and practice implications of the study of the SAS 100 program lay in the area of student retention, an area traditionally examined through the simple use of quantitative data such as retention rates and cumulative GPAs. Throughout this study, quantitative data were used to document aggregate program information, to codify survey responses, and to support and reinforce data gathered about the student participants obtained through qualitative methods.

Research Questions

The general research question for this study is “What is the impact of the motivational/empowerment model implemented at UNCG on academic probation students?” The following specific research questions were discussed:

1. What are the major social and academic characteristics of students on academic probation at UNCG?
2. What are the major reasons for students performing poorly enough academically to be placed on academic probation at UNCG?
3. How does the SAS 100 program facilitate students on academic probation to improve their academic strategies?

Settings

There are several goals for the SAS 100 program at UNCG. A central purpose of the SAS 100 program is to help students generate a profile of their best learning styles, study-skills strategies, study habits, customary accommodations, and needs based upon their past experiences and perceptions. This profile-generating process is at the core of the students’ academic recovery process. Appreciative Inquiry is used to identify and build upon the students’ best habits and academic strengths so that they can recover rapidly. The academic profile is based on the six latent traits measured by the six subscales: *Social Behavior*, *Academic Preparedness*, *Interdependence*, *Dedication*, *Self-knowledge*, and *Confidence*. While these latent traits are not directly observable, changes in behaviors connected to these traits may indicate development in these areas, i.e., evidence of development in the trait of Interdependence may be evidenced through a

student having developed improved support systems on campus, becoming more knowledgeable about and willing to use on- and off-campus resources to support academic efforts, and becoming aware of what resources they may need to turn to in order to deal with differing academic situations. Additionally, SAS 100 is designed to assist students in meeting the academic good standing policy; the class meetings and face-to-face planning sessions have been developed to assist students in developing strategies and quickly identifying resources so that they may recover their academic standing within a 16-week semester.

The SAS 100 program assists students on academic probation in acting interdependently and gaining personal insight by taking responsibility, managing their behaviors, believing in themselves, and setting goals accordingly. Even if the students are not academically successful during this semester, the skills may still benefit them in the future.

Additionally, the program aims for students on academic probation to meet the academic good-standing policy for the institution. The UNCG's probation policy states that if the student has earned over thirty credit hours, the student must earn a 2.3 GPA for the term, or raise his/her cumulative GPA to at least a 2.0. If he/she has earned less than thirty credit hours, the student must receive a 2.3 GPA for the term, or raise his/her cumulative GPA to at least a 1.75.

All possible efforts are made to ensure that students who are required to take the course are enrolled by the first class meeting. Students are contacted via letter, e-mail, and phone to let them know that they must register for the course to avoid suspension.

The course starts the second week of classes so that all students have an opportunity to enroll in the course before it begins. Students who do not register for the course are suspended from the institution. Students are also suspended if they miss *one* class meeting. This stringency is essential for this course to be effective because it forces the students to take the course seriously.

The SAS 100 course uses Downing's (2002) *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life*. This text was chosen because it covers the four key topic areas of the model: taking personal responsibility, identifying and developing academic strengths and weaknesses, setting achievable goals and life plans, and self-management. Students are required to complete weekly journals using *On Course* as well as to attend two instructor meetings throughout the eight-week period.

Participants

Population description

In order to address the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from student surveys, individual interviews, and student journal entries. Quantitative data were collected from the survey responses of 285 students enrolled in SAS 100 course during the Spring 2005 semester. Qualitative data were collected from interviews and journal entries of 23 volunteers from this group (see Appendix E).

During the Spring 2005 semester, there were 285 students enrolled in the SAS 100 program at UNCG. The students on academic probation who were enrolled in the SAS 100 program were not predicted to perform poorly in college. On average, the students' high school GPA was 3.03 ($SD = .447$) and the mean total SAT score for these

students on academic probation was 992.29 ($SD = 137.03$) with a range from 470 to 1430.

At UNCG, the *predicted GPA*, a composite of the student's high school GPA and SAT scores, contributes heavily to the Admissions staff's decision as to whether a student is admissible to UNCG. Among second-semester students on academic probation, the predicted GPA calculated by the Admissions staff when they were admitted was 2.30 on average ($SD = .366$), but the actual average first-semester GPA for students on academic probation was .97. A GPA at or above a 2.0 is considered to be in good academic standing at UNCG. For students who were placed on academic probation, their predicted GPA was not an accurate predictor of their academic performance during their first semester. Furthermore, several of the students ranked among the top quarter in their high school class, and others had successfully completed coursework at other institutions.

A total number of 279 students responded to the pre-survey at the beginning of the spring semester, and 223 responded to the post-survey at the end of the semester. Forty-eight students were suspended at the end of the semester, accounting for much of the attrition among the respondents. The overall response rate for the survey was 87.19%, and the reliability of the instrument was .837.

Qualitative data were drawn from face-to-face interviews and journal entries. Twenty-three volunteers were interviewed during the semester. Each student participated in two interviews based on the interview protocol (see Appendix D). The first interview took place within the first six weeks of the semester, focusing on the students' learning experiences before coming to UNCG, their beliefs about their academic experience at

UNCG, their greatest academic successes at UNCG, and their biggest challenges in remaining enrolled at UNCG. From this first interview, information about the students' previous academic experiences was gathered. The second interview took place after the SAS 100 course had ended, within the last six weeks of the semester. The second interview focused on the support systems students had identified at UNCG and the impact of the SAS 100 program on their academic success. From this second interview, information regarding the impact of the SAS 100 program was collected.

General Description of Participants

The survey data indicated that the distribution of participants enrolled in the spring 2005 SAS 100 program generally represented the demographics of the student population at UNCG. Among the 279 students who responded to the pre-survey, 112 were male (40%) and 167 were female (60%). Most of the participants were White Americans (61%), and 25% were African Americans. Forty-five percent of the participants were transfer students. Because of the nature of the program, most of the participants (55%) were first-year college students, while 22% were sophomores, 20% were juniors, and only 2% were senior college students. Among all the participants, 46% of them lived on campus and most of the commuters traveled less than two hours to reach the campus (51%).

While all students who participated in SAS 100 during the spring 2005 semester were invited to participate in interviews, there were 23 volunteers. The 23 participants were then interviewed twice during the semester and their journal entries were also collected to provide qualitative data for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection approach selected for this study was that of a Mixed Method Equivalent Status Sequential Design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, p. 15), utilizing a two-stage design.

Stage One

The first phase of the study consisted of a *Student Strategies for Success Survey* (see Appendix C) of all students enrolled in SAS 100 at UNCG during the spring semester of the 2005 academic year.

Survey instrument

The instrument used in this study, the *Student Strategies for Success Survey* (Hutson, 2003), was developed in order to measure the impact of the SAS 100 program on students, to better understand why students are at risk for college attrition, and track problems in order to improve intervention strategies. This is a Likert-scale instrument involving responses ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree* with *Neutral* as a midpoint. In the first pilot of the instrument, information was collected on demographics, behaviors, attitudes toward college, and student beliefs about why they are on academic probation. The survey was approved by the UNCG Institutional Review Board and was piloted pre- and post- with SAS 100 students during the spring 2002 and spring 2003 semesters. This survey initially contained ten subscales: *Social Behavior*, *Academic Preparedness*, *Time Management*, *Study Skills*, *Goal Setting*, *Connectedness to Campus*, *Interdependence*, *Dedication*, *Confidence*, and *Self-knowledge*. There was a high reliability for the pilot survey ($\alpha = 0.791$), and the reliability remained high for different

gender groups and ethnic groups. Factor analysis indicated that items from different subscales loaded similarly and it was observed that different subscales could be combined. Ultimately, the analyses led to the reduction and combination of some subscales. As a result, ten subscales have been reduced to six based on the theoretical framework and the factor analysis.

Item Response Theory (IRT) is a probabilistic model for expressing the association between an individual's response to an item and the underlying latent variable, frequently described as a "trait", being measured by the instrument. The latent variable, expressed as θ , is a continuous unidimensional construct that explains the covariance among item responses (Steinberg & Thissen, 1995). Persons at higher levels of θ have a higher probability of endorsing the statement represented within an item.

Item Response Theory models are used for two basic purposes: to obtain scaled estimates of θ , and to calibrate items and examine their properties (Lord, 1980). Whereas this study focused on the former, the pilot involved the latter in order to improve the quality of the instrument. In the pilot of the instrument, Item Response Theory (IRT) was used to explore the information curves and item characteristic curves. IRT is the study of test and item scores based on assumptions concerning the mathematical relationship between traits and item responses. For dichotomously scored items, it is common practice to discuss only the item response function for the positive response to an item, although a response function also exists for the negative category. However, as the survey instrument involves polytomous items, each category is represented by an option response function. Specifically, Samejima's (1969, 1997) Graded Response Model, with

the theta identified as *self-perception*, was used. IRT is a theory-based model that relates characteristics of questionnaire items (item parameters) and characteristics of individuals (latent variables) to the probability of choosing each of the response categories. IRT item parameters are not dependent on the sample of respondents to whom the questions were administered. Moreover, it does not assume that the instrument is equally reliable for all levels of the latent variable examined. The Graded Response Model was used to estimate item characteristics, such as the item difficulty and item discrimination power. The results showed that some items were redundant, and contributed little to the overall precision of the instrument

The item parameters of Samejima's (1969, 1997) Graded Response Model were estimated for each 5-point Likert item used in this study. The Graded Response Model is a potentially useful item response model when item response options can be conceptualized as ordered categories (e.g., with Likert-type rating scales). Within the Graded Response Model framework, an item response scale is conceptualized as a series of $m - 1$ response dichotomies, where m represents the number of response options for a given item. Thus, an item rated on a 1-to-4 scale has three response dichotomies: (a) Category 1 versus Categories 2, 3, and 4; (b) Categories 1 and 2 versus Categories 3 and 4; and (c) Categories 1, 2, and 3 versus-Category 4.

The Graded Response Model (Samejima, 1969) was used to reduce the length of the individual subscales within the instrument. First, the MULTILOG (Thissen, 2003) computer program was used to estimate item parameters and information functions for the original items. The least desirable item, identified on the basis of its information

function, was removed from the scale. The least desirable item was the item that provided less information in the θ range from -3.0 to 3.0 than any other item. This method was repeated iteratively. After each deletion, MULTILOG was used to estimate item parameters and information functions for the remaining items. The test information function was also examined at each step and reduction of its precision noted. From this analysis, seven items were dropped because they were poor discriminators or did not provide a sufficient amount of information to help estimate the subjects' latent ability. These seven items were removed from the scale with almost no degradation of its test information function. Further attempts to reduce the number of items caused a significant decrease in the amount of information provided by the test. As a result of IRT analysis, the final instrument was reduced to 18 items with almost no loss in its precision.

Item Characteristic Curves (ICCs) illustrate, in probabilistic terms, the relationship between a person's response to a question and his or her level on the construct (symbolized by θ) being measured by the scale. This relationship is conditional in that persons with higher levels on the underlying construct will have a higher probability of endorsing response categories that are consistent with higher trait levels. Figure 4 presents the ICCs, estimated using the IRT Graded Response Model, for the question, "I feel I made a wise decision in attending UNCG". This is a pilot survey question that was eventually dropped from the instrument. In the pilot responses, part-time students who lived off campus had a higher probability to endorse "strongly disagree" than students who lived on campus.

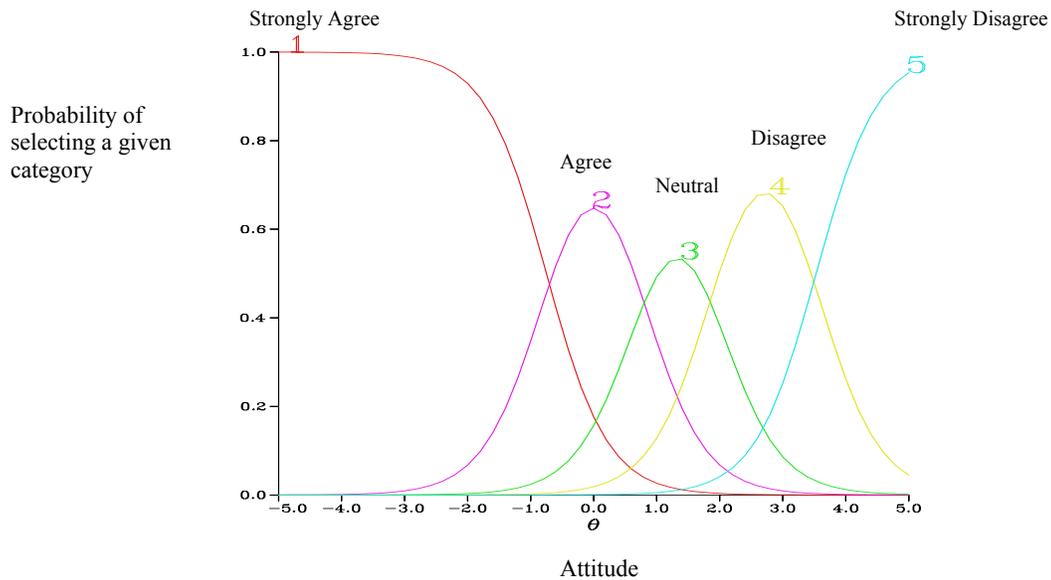


Figure 4. ICC

ICCs provide information about item properties. The steepness of the curves reflect the discrimination ability of the item, that is, how well the item’s five response categories discriminate among students with different levels of belief about this statement. Steeper slopes indicate that smaller changes along the construct continuum will reflect larger changes in item endorsement probabilities. The locations where response curves intersect along the construct continuum reflect an item’s difficulty or severity. ICC curve intersection points are determined by the Graded Response Model’s threshold parameters. In Figure 4, the “neutral” response option is overshadowed by its neighbor categories “agree” and “disagree” indicating that at no point along the construct continuum is a person likely to answer “neutral” over any other category. This finding suggests that the response option may be dropped in revised versions of the questionnaire.

Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis is typically used to test for item fairness. The procedure assumes that if test takers have approximately the same knowledge as measured by total test scores, then they should perform in similar ways on individual test questions regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity. However, Johanson (1997) discusses applications of DIF techniques to attitudinal data wherein if there are two groups of respondents it is possible for one item to be more easily agreed upon by members of one group even after controlling for overall attitude level. The pilot data revealed that DIF was only significant when gender groups were considered. It was found that three items favored women and three favored men. These items were not removed from the survey, as the IRT Graded Response Model analysis suggested these were good items, and it was hypothesized that the response patterns indicated differences in attitude between the two groups.

The current survey instrument is composed of six major subscales that have been verified through confirmatory factor analysis: *Social Behavior* (three items, $\alpha = .786$), *Academic Preparedness* (three items, $\alpha = .823$), *Interdependence* (three items, $\alpha = .751$), *Dedication* (three items, $\alpha = .697$), *Self-knowledge* (three items, $\alpha = .752$), *Confidence* (three items, $\alpha = .753$). There are currently 18 items in the instrument, with an overall reliability of .837.

The *Social Behavior* subscale measures students' perception of their ability to manage personal interactions on campus (e.g., I feel comfortable contacting my professors outside of class). The *Academic Preparedness* subscale measures belief about academic ability and preparation (e.g., I know how to study for different types of tests).

The *Interdependence* subscale measures students' beliefs about their ability to establish and maintain relationships and social networks that assist them in achieving goals and maintaining an adequate quality of life (e.g., I feel I am a part of a social network on campus). The *Dedication* subscale is concerned with students' beliefs about their ability to commit to goals and follow through on activities (e.g., I have decided on a major). The *Self-knowledge* subscale is a measure of student beliefs about their ability to make accurate judgments concerning their performance (e.g., I balance school and other responsibilities effectively). The *Confidence* subscale assesses students' perceptions of their personal confidence (e.g., I am confident in my ability to succeed).

The new instrument was piloted pre- and post- with SAS 100 students over the fall 2004 semester. The current survey is provided in Appendix 2. It is hoped that this study will, in part, provide further information to improve the survey instrument so that it may be used for future SAS 100 students and perhaps be used with different at-risk student groups across other campuses.

Survey Response Rates

One concern surrounding the use of a survey instrument is the anticipated response rate. Historically, response rates to survey instruments vary widely. For example, in an examination of 15 articles using mailed surveys published in business, sociology, and psychology journals between 1960 and 1982, Chiu and Brennan (1990) reported response rates between 10% and 80% and in a meta-analysis of 93 research studies, Yu and Cooper (1983) reported an average survey response rate of 47%.

In this study, there is an advantage in that students who are on probation were required to take the SAS 100 course, and the instructor for each section of the course distributed the surveys during class time. However, students could refuse to participate. The survey was also given pre and post, and in addition to the attrition from the course that resulted from students withdrawing from the university, students could participate just in the pre- or the post-survey. In addition to convincing students to respond initially, it was necessary to have them also participate in the post-survey.

Chiu and Brennan (1990) recommended that in order to maximize the response rates of survey respondents, a cover letter signed by a person of importance to the respondent should be included with the questionnaire. Each survey given to SAS 100 students was accompanied by a cover letter describing the purpose of the research and the keeping of confidentiality of personal information, signed by the researcher, the SAS 100 coordinator, and the Student Academic Services associate director in charge of retention.

Survey administration

The survey was administered on the first and last meeting of each SAS 100 class. Students were asked to review the IRB form and to sign it if they wished to participate. It is made clear in the cover letter that while the information they provide may assist in the development of the class, there is no penalty for not participating in the study, that students may choose to withdraw from the study at any point, and that the information collected is kept confidential. It took respondents an average of 10 minutes to complete the survey.

Stage Two

Stage Two focused on developing an understanding of the students on academic probation, the SAS 100 program, and the program's role in student retention, through the use of qualitative data. The researcher conducted individual student interviews to capture reasons for students performing poorly enough to be placed on probation and to learn how the students developed improved academic strategies, and to examine the factors that impact student retention.

The researcher developed the interview protocol (see Appendix D) based on the literature review. Data gathered through interview sessions were transcribed and imported to NUD*IST 6 for analysis.

Sampling

The 279 participants formed a convenience sample for the purpose of this study. All the participants were enrolled in the SAS 100 program during 2005-2006 academic year. As noted previously, the survey data indicated that the demographics of students enrolled in the SAS 100 program tended to mirror the overall demographics of the campus. Further, the distribution of the demographic data and GPA data collected in this study also reflected the overall demographics of probation students at UNCG since the inception of the SAS 100 program. Aggregated survey data collected since the spring semester of 2002 indicates that the SAS 100 student population has tended to be about 60% women and 40% men, that about 65% of the participants have been White Americans and 21% African Americans with the remainder being primarily Asian Americans, and that about 45% of the participants are transfer students. Additionally, this

aggregated data indicate there were 52% commuters and 48% residential students, over 60% of the participants were first-year college students, and over 2% of the participants were seniors. The demographics of the respondents in this study parallel that of all SAS 100 students, which suggests that this study's survey findings are representative of the overall UNCG SAS 100 population.

All students who were enrolled in the SAS 100 class were asked to respond to the survey, resulting in an 87.19% response rate. Similarly, all SAS 100 students were invited to participate in the interviews, and 23 students volunteered to do so. Each student is required to have a face-to-face discussion with his or her instructor, and in order to avoid bias, the interview was arranged as a separate event. The participants volunteered to participate in the study by responding to an e-mailed invitation, and met with the researcher individually in conference rooms in UNC-Greensboro's Counseling and Consulting Clinic. Each of the 23 interviewees participated in both the initial and second interviews.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this section, an outline of the relationship between the methodology and the research questions is provided to summarize the design of this study. Furthermore, some important strategies in data analysis and interpretation are discussed to provide the construction of causal networks and models for the whole study.

Research Matrix

The use of three major data collection methods – survey, interviews, and student journal entries – aimed at seeking answers for the general research question, i.e., “What is

the impact of the motivational/empowerment model implemented at UNCG for students on academic probation?” Table 1 links the data collection methods, data sources, analysis, and interpretation methods to the three specific research questions.

NUD*IST 6 software was used in managing and analyzing the data. Numerical data from the surveys were first inputted into SPSS and imported to NUD*IST as part of the case base data. Non-numerical data were organized by cases and coded as one project under specific categories.

Verbal Analysis

Chi’s (1997) verbal analysis method was used in analyzing qualitative data collected from interviews and document data.

According to Chi (1997), verbal analysis is a method for quantifying the subjective or qualitative coding of the contents of verbal utterances whereby the researcher tabulates, counts, and draws relationships between the occurrences of different kinds of utterances to reduce the subjectiveness of qualitative coding. Chi’s method of coding and analyzing the qualitative data consists of eight functional steps: 1) reducing the data; 2) segmenting the data into units; 3) categorizing or coding the units; 4) operationalizing evidence (for coding) in the coded data; 5) depicting the coded data; 6) seeking patterns and coherence; 7) interpreting the patterns; and 8) repeating the whole process if necessary.

For the purpose of this research, participants’ document data and interview data were analyzed using verbal analysis.

Table 1. Research Matrix

Research Questions	Data Collection Method (V=Verbal data; N=Numerical data)					Data Analysis
	Student Success Survey		Student Interviews		Journal Entries	
	Pre	Post	First Time	Second Time		
1. What are the major social and academic characteristics of students on academic probation at UNCG?	N		V			Descriptives; Verbal Analysis
2. What are the major reasons for students performing poorly enough academically to be placed on academic probation at UNCG?			V		V	Verbal Analysis
3. How does the SAS 100 program facilitate students on academic probation to improve their academic strategies	N	N	V	V	V	t-tests; Verbal Analysis

Objectivity, Reliability, and Validity

As this study involves both qualitative and quantitative components, issues of objectivity, reliability, and validity take on significant concern.

Quantitative components

Reliability refers to the reproducibility of a measurement, and is quantified by taking several measurements on the same subjects. Poor reliability degrades the precision of a single measurement and reduces the ability to track changes in measurements in the study. Validity refers to the agreement between the value of a measurement and its true value, and is quantified by comparing the study's measurements with values that are as close to the true values as possible. Poor validity also degrades the precision of a single measurement, and it reduces the ability to characterize relationships between variables in descriptive studies.

Accurate confirmatory factor analysis is dependent upon reliable instrumentation. In this study, the survey instrument was put through two iterations, each with its own pilot. The current instrument has a Cronbach's alpha of .837. The use of factor analysis, Item Response Theory, and Differential Item Functioning were used to refine and strengthen the instrument.

Qualitative components

According to Merriam (2002), "Internal validity asks the question, how congruent are one's findings with reality?" (p. 25). In qualitative approaches, essentially, there is a level of interpretation employed by the researcher in order to give meaning to the data. "Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner (i.e., that it is always interpreted)

internal validity is considered a strength of qualitative research” (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). If internal validity is taken as a measure of credibility, one measure for credibility is established by asking participants to review interpretations of their comments. Merriam (2002) refers to this process as “*member checks*” (p. 26). To establish internal validity, member checks were used to establish credibility of results.

In the qualitative component of the study, external validity or “transferability” is the extent to which the results can be generalized to different learning contexts. Trochim (2002) contends that the researcher can enhance transferability by conducting a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. The person who wishes to transfer the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible it would be to make the transfer. Merriam (2002) refers to this type of generalization as “...*concrete universals*. The generalization lies in the particular; what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer to similar situations subsequently encountered” (p. 28). By providing a rich description of the background to this study, reviewing the existing retention models, and providing a research context (i.e., researcher’s position, course context, sample description), a measure of external validity exists in this study.

In qualitative research, reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 2002). It would be possible to replicate the methodology itself and to follow the same collection procedures; however, it would be impossible to replicate respondents’ answers and interpretations of that data. Based on this procedural quandary, Guba and Lincoln (1989) introduced the notion of “dependability.” In

clarifying dependability, Trochim (2002) asserts that the idea of dependability emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study. Accountability of the research method and procedures were clearly documented by the use of an “*audit trail*.” Merriam (2002) describes an audit trail as some type of documentation, such as research journals or student documents, that helps explain how results were derived. An audit trail helps account for any changes to the proposal and is an actual record of what occurred.

Ethical Issues

Human subjects were involved in the research. There were no risks to individuals participating in this research, and the methods used were in accordance with the IRB for UNCG. All interviews were conducted on the UNCG campus, and the discussions recorded verbatim. Surveys were administered in class and students had the opportunity to refrain from participating. In all data-gathering methods, participants were assured that their responses were strictly confidential and that their responses were voluntary. Interviewers and class facilitators verbally explained the consent form, including study objectives, the voluntary nature of all responses, and the potential risks and benefits to study participants. After reading the consent form, the facilitator answered any questions participants had and requested each participant’s signature. Data from the interviews were transcribed without any personally identifying information appearing in the

transcripts. Any electronic, paper, or taped documents created during the study were kept in a locked file cabinet at the residence of the researcher.

Participation in this study may provide immediate benefits to the participants, as it may lead to improved course design and support services for probation students while the course is still in session.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is threefold: 1) to describe the characteristics of college students who performed poorly enough to be placed on academic probation at UNCG; 2) to depict the impact of the SAS 100 programs on probation students; and 3) to measure the effectiveness of the SAS 100 program on student retention, student achievement, and student self-improvement.

The general research question for this study is “What is the impact of the motivational/empowerment model implemented at UNCG on academic probation students?” The following specific research questions were discussed:

1. What are the major social and academic characteristics of students on academic probation at UNCG?
2. What are the major reasons for students performing poorly enough academically to be placed on academic probation at UNCG?
3. How does the SAS 100 program facilitate students on academic probation to improve their academic strategies?

In order to address the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from student surveys, individual interviews, and student journal entries. Quantitative data were collected from the survey responses of 285 students enrolled in

the SAS 100 course during the Spring 2005 semester. Qualitative data were collected from interviews and journal entries of 23 volunteers from this group (see Appendix E).

During the Spring 2005 semester, there were 285 students enrolled in the SAS 100 program at UNCG. On average, these students' high school GPA was 3.03 ($SD = .447$) and their mean total SAT score was 992.29 ($SD = 137.03$) within a range of 470 to 1430.

At UNCG, the *predicted GPA*, a composite of the student's high school GPA and SAT score, contributes heavily to the Admissions staff's decision as to whether a student is admissible to UNCG. Among second-semester students on academic probation, the predicted GPA calculated by the Admissions staff when they were admitted was 2.30 on average ($SD = .366$), but their actual average first-semester GPA was .97, which placed them on second semester probation. A student with a GPA at or above a 2.0 is considered to be in good academic standing at UNCG. For students who were placed on academic probation, their predicted GPA was not an accurate predictor of their academic performance during their first semester. Furthermore, several of the students ranked among the top quarter in their high school class, and others had successfully completed coursework at other higher education institutions.

A total of 279 SAS 100 students responded to the pre-survey administered at the beginning of the spring 2005 semester. The reliability of the instrument in this study remained high ($\alpha = .837$) compared to the pilot study ($\alpha = .791$). The overall response rate for the survey was 87.19%.

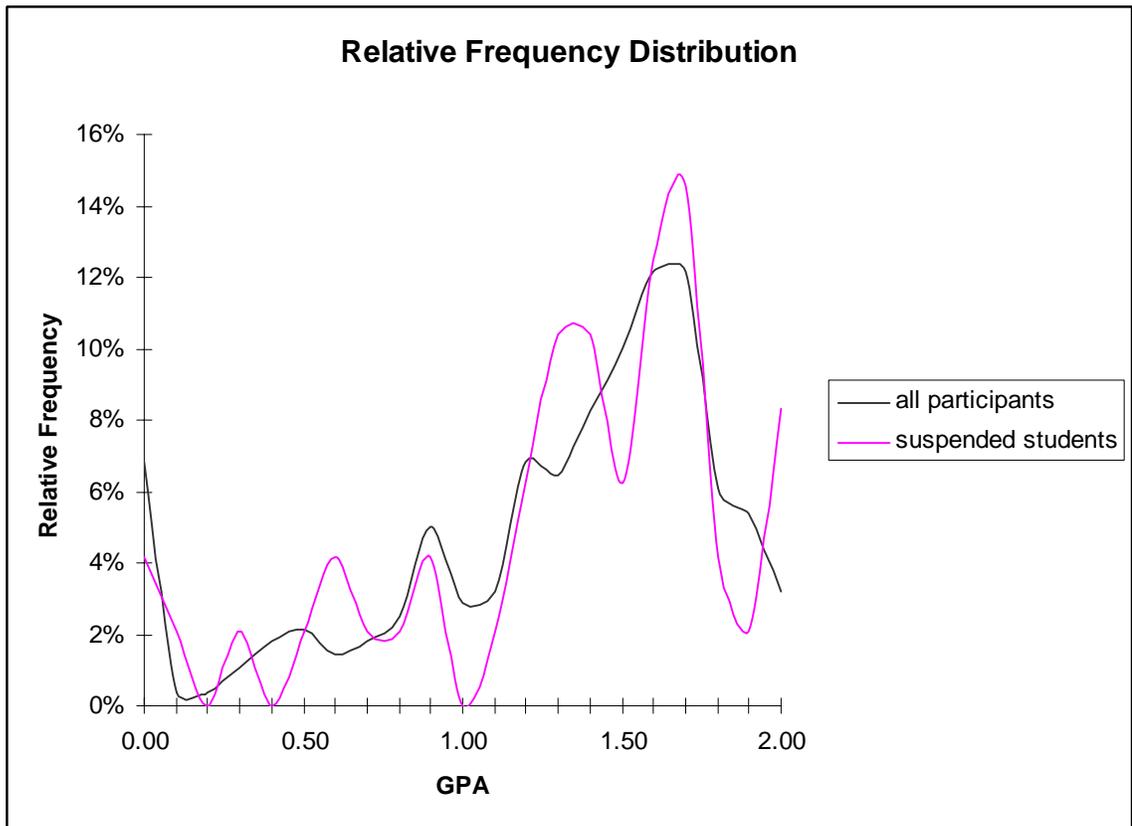


Figure 5. Relative frequency distribution of fall 2004 GPAs of total participants and suspended students in the spring 2005 SAS 100 program

Of the 285 program participants, 223 responded to the post-survey administered at the end of the semester. Forty-eight students were suspended at the end of the spring semester, accounting for much of the attrition among the respondents. It should be noted that the distribution of fall GPAs among those students suspended from the program was similar to that of all participants, suggesting that those students who were suspended from the program were not solely among the least academically able in the program. The relative frequency distribution of fall 2004 GPAs of the total participants and suspended students is provided in figure 5.

Qualitative data were drawn from face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher with students enrolled in the spring 2005 SAS 100 classes, and from analysis of journal entries that these students maintained as part of their SAS 100 course requirements. Twenty-three volunteers from the spring 2005 SAS 100 classes were interviewed over the course of the semester. Each student participated in two interviews based on the interview protocol (see Appendix D). The first interview took place within the first six-weeks of the spring 2005 semester, focusing on the students' learning experiences before coming to UNCG, their beliefs about their academic experience at UNCG, their greatest academic successes at UNCG, and their biggest challenges in remaining enrolled at UNCG. From this first interview, information about the students' previous academic experiences was gathered. The second interview took place after the SAS 100 course had ended, within the second six-week period of the semester. The second interview focused on the support systems these students identified at UNCG and the impact of the SAS 100 program on their academic success. From this second interview, information regarding the impact of the SAS 100 program was collected.

This chapter provides the findings from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis based on the three research questions.

Research Question 1: Characteristics of Students on Probation

In order to describe the characteristics of students on probation, the descriptive data collected from the pre-survey were analyzed. Dependent t-tests were conducted to detect the mean differences from pre to post across the six subscales. In order to adjust for potential inflated Type I error rate because of performing multiple t-tests, the

significance level for subscale t-tests was set at .008, and the significance level for item t-tests was set at .002. The more stringent significance levels decrease the possibility of rejecting a true null hypothesis.

General Description of Participants

The survey data indicated that the distribution of participants enrolled in the spring 2005 SAS 100 program generally represented the demographics of the UNCG student population. Among the 279 students who responded to the pre-survey, 112 were male (40%) and 167 were female (60%). Most of the participants were White Americans (61%), and 25% were African Americans. Forty-five percent of the participants were transfer students. Because of the nature of the program, most of the participants (55%) were first-year college students, while 22% were sophomores, 20% were juniors, and only 2% were senior college students. Among all the participants, 46% of them lived on campus with most being commuters who traveled less than two hours to campus (51%).

In addition to the descriptive data, the researcher also collected information regarding students' work hours and study hours, which in previous studies (Hutson, Amundsen, & He, 2005; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, in press) were noted as factors that impact student academic achievement. In the present study, 33% of the participants reported that they did not have any part-time jobs, while 50% of them reported working between 1 to 25 hours a week. Seventeen percent of the participants reported that they worked over 26 hours a week before they enrolled in SAS 100. Most of the participants (83%) reported that they spent from 1 to 10 hours every week engaged in study. Very few (4%) indicated that they studied more than 15 hours a week.

Descriptive Factors for Student on Probation

To better understand the predictors of student success, student pre-survey data were analyzed according to student self-reported gender, ethnicity, transfer status, classification, and community college experiences.

Gender

In comparing male and female participants' pre-survey responses, no statistically significant difference was noted between the groups on their overall survey scores or on the specific subscales (see Table 2). Among all the participants in this study, male participants scored slightly higher than female participants on five out of six subscales, except Dedication.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and F-values of total subscale scores by gender

Subscales	Gender				F
	Male		Female		
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness	3.51	.71	3.47	1.99	.04
Confidence	4.28	.49	4.21	.57	1.02
Dedication	4.16	.69	4.21	.84	.21
Interdependence	3.25	.69	3.12	.75	1.80
Self-Knowledge	3.58	.70	3.56	.70	.04
Social Behavior	3.83	.63	3.69	.70	2.84

* $\alpha \leq .008$

Ethnicity

Based on the participants' self-reported ethnicity, the pre-survey responses from different ethnic groups were compared. There was no significant difference among the

ethnic groups noted on participants' overall responses or on responses concerning specific subscales (see Table 3).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and F-values of total subscale scores by ethnicity

Subscales	Ethnicity												F
	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Pacific Islander		Multiracial		
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness	3.54	1.98	3.37	.71	3.30	.80	3.67	.50	3.83	.96	3.50	.75	.16
Confidence	4.18	.55	4.37	.53	4.18	.53	4.00	.47	4.50	.43	4.54	.39	1.92
Dedication	4.06	.81	4.49	.63	4.24	.63	4.09	.93	4.41	.50	3.95	.95	2.63
Interdependence	3.20	.74	3.13	.68	2.84	.73	3.42	.62	3.25	.95	3.08	.88	.61
Self-Knowledge	3.50	.70	3.71	.55	3.45	.65	3.71	.52	3.75	1.10	3.16	.79	1.46
Social Behavior	3.75	.70	3.74	.71	3.55	.39	3.57	.59	3.58	.50	3.75	.58	.18

* $\alpha \leq .008$

Transfer Students

Pre-survey responses indicated that 44% of respondents were transfer students. In comparing transfer and non-transfer students' pre-survey responses, it was noted that non-transfer students scored significantly higher on the subscales regarding interdependence and dedication (see Table 4).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and F-values of total subscale scores by transfer status

Subscales	Transfer				F
	Yes		No		
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness	3.45	.74	3.53	2.05	.15
Confidence	4.28	.52	4.21	.54	1.36
Dedication	4.40	.67	4.02	.83	16.16*
Interdependence	3.00	.74	3.32	.69	12.75*
Self-Knowledge	3.61	.73	3.53	3.67	.87
Social Behavior	3.76	.72	3.73	.64	.18

* $\alpha \leq .008$

In terms of their interdependence, it was noted that non-transfer students were more likely than transfer students to feel that they were part of a social network on campus (item 12), and tended to participate in activities on campus (item 19). When asked about their level of dedication to completing their degree, it was noted that non-transfer students were more likely than transfer students to have decided upon a major (item 13), to be more certain of their future career (item 17), and to be committed to completing the degree. In addition to interdependence and dedication, non-transfer students also reported they had a clearer picture of their long-term goals than did transfer students (item 26).

Classification

Because the participants enrolled in SAS 100 include first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, the mean score differences among the four classifications were also compared. It was noted that juniors and seniors demonstrated higher levels of dedication and academic preparedness before taking SAS 100 than did first-year and sophomore students (see Table 5).

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and F-values of total subscale scores by classification

Subscales	Classification								F
	First-year		Sophomore		Junior		Senior		
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness	3.35	.69	3.38	.72	3.54	.80	8.33	.45	18.56*
Confidence	4.19	.54	4.26	.52	4.35	.53	4.40	.59	1.31
Dedication	3.98	.85	4.45	.63	4.46	.58	4.45	.60	8.54*
Interdependence	3.26	.67	3.11	.82	2.99	.76	2.93	.82	2.18
Self-Knowledge	3.49	.67	3.64	.68	3.67	.78	3.80	.96	1.26
Social Behavior	3.71	.63	3.73	.77	3.81	.69	4.00	.52	.54

* $\alpha \leq .008$

Juniors and seniors scored higher than first-year and sophomore students when asked if they had decided upon a major (item 13) and what their career goals were (item 17). They also reported better self-knowledge concerning their long-term goals (item 26). First-year students, on the contrary, scored lowest among the four groups.

Community College Experiences

Among the 279 participants, 85 reported that they had community college experiences before they came to UNCG. Based on their pre-survey responses, it was noted that participants with community college experiences demonstrated higher levels of dedication than those with no community college experiences (see Table 6).

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and F-values of total subscale scores by level of community college experience

Subscales	Community College				F
	Yes		No		
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness	3.48	.79	3.50	1.09	.17
Confidence	4.27	.53	4.24	.54	1.37
Dedication	4.51	.55	4.05	.83	7.64*
Interdependence	3.05	.79	3.22	.70	2.09
Self-Knowledge	3.72	.71	3.48	.68	2.74
Social Behavior	3.78	.75	3.72	.64	.13

* $\alpha \leq .008$

Research Question 2: Reasons for Being Placed on Academic Probation

Pre and post individual interviews were conducted with 23 volunteers from among those students enrolled in SAS 100 using the interview protocol (see Appendix D). The first interview focused on students' academic experience before coming to UNCG, their beliefs about their academic experience at UNCG, their greatest academic successes at UNCG, and their greatest challenges in remaining enrolled at UNCG. From this first interview, information regarding the students' characteristics and experiences were gathered. Four unique groups of students became apparent based upon the information gathered from the first interview regarding the students' characteristics and experiences. Further, the reasons for students performing poorly enough to be placed on academic probation were analyzed and compared to survey responses.

Grouping of Participants

The 23 participants involved in the interviews were categorized into the following social cohorts based upon age and living arrangements: traditional students who lived on

campus (Group 1); traditional-aged students who lived off campus (Group 2); non-traditional students who lived in the area immediately surrounding campus who were enrolled full-time (Group 3); and non-traditional commuting students who were enrolled part-time (Group 4). The following section provides a discussion of the characteristics of these four cohorts.

Traditional students who lived on campus

This cohort group involved traditional age-college students. They were 18 to 23 years old and were living in campus residence halls. These students typically had impressive academic success in middle and high school. Two of them had previously been in the UNCG honors program.

Five students who did not feel connected to their classmates in high school reported that they found a group of supportive friends during college in their residence hall communities. Vanessa (#17, G1) is a member of a special learning community within her residence hall. She declared, “In high school, I was smart, played sports, and was not in the popular group... Then I came here [the learning community residence hall], they were all kind of the outcasts in school and we all became really good friends” (Journal Entry, April 4, 2005). Sammy (#22, G1) is a junior transfer student with a physical disability. She reported having made many friends, feeling included in activities, and enjoying living in the residence hall. She indicated that she had never had a more positive experience with a group of peers.

For the most part, when asked about their experiences at UNCG, each of these students focused on academic problems. The first-year students also reflected on the

barriers that lacking self-discipline or ambition presents to achieving success in one's college career. Participants commented that simply being unsure of their major or of a future career direction could have severe implications in terms of motivation, involvement, and the amount of time it takes to complete one's degree. One student, Mark (#10, G1), also mentioned that unless a student has learned to practice self-discipline in high school it is difficult to learn it while experiencing the freedoms that college allows: "I mean, you don't have your parents leaning over your shoulder telling you what to do" (Interview, February 12, 2005). Two thirds of the students agreed, however, that developing commitment and discipline were a personal responsibility, and four of them seemed to think that the student's family environment and beliefs played a central role in shaping these traits.

One barrier that was mentioned was a lack of study skills necessary to accomplish college-level work. Not only did students have difficulty in studying effectively, but also they had difficulty managing their time, balancing their social activities with their academic commitments, and estimating the amount of work necessary to perform well in their classes. Three participants mentioned that they had not taken their high school studies seriously, so they were not prepared for the rigors of their college classes. In addition, students mentioned that the inability to control the urge to procrastinate had created barriers to academic success.

Three of these students were African American women from rural areas in eastern North Carolina. They described being identified as academically talented and among the strongest students in their high school, and they did not expect academic problems at

UNCG. Each had been accepted at other institutions. However, they described finding themselves academically unprepared once they enrolled at UNCG. Each student described how, while in high school, since they were considered very able students, they were permitted to turn in assignments late and were given little homework, while their peers were expected to work harder. For example, Sammy (#22, G1) commented, "It's a big adjustment, coming into college and getting 'Cs' when you got 'As' in high school." (Interview, January 7, 2005). Similarly, Oprah (#12, G1) asserted, "You never really learned to study. I'm sorry, cramming the night before is not really studying. Then you are at a loss about what you are doing wrong" (Interview, January 15, 2005).

All residential students, regardless of demographic characteristics, admitted that they believed they had poor study habits. They often commented that they had been taught to equate long hours with effective study, and had developed no truly efficient study skills. Two students commented that they felt they had lost their identity. As Benji (#2, G1) put it, "I was always a good student, now I am not. So what am I?" (Interview, February 4, 2005).

Similarly, almost all of these students described feeling labeled or ostracized by being required to take SAS 100, and hoped their peers on campus would not learn of their academic status.

I was embarrassed, ashamed, humiliated at the fact that I had to be here. I thought SAS 100 was some kind of remedial course where students came and sat for an hour or so and thought about why they failed last semester. And I have to admit, the worse part of all was the 'field trip', where we walked across campus to the student success center and the learning center. I was so embarrassed and afraid that someone I knew would see me and I would have to think up a good lie (Sammy, #22, G1) (Interview, March 5, 2005).

I know when I went to the UNCG bookstore to buy my book for this class I was so embarrassed that I had bought another book to go along with it so that I could hide the cover... The SAS 100 book is actually a very good book, and I guess it doesn't matter now. I am still using it even [though] I won't be in the class anymore. But it was an issue at first, to buy the book. (Jane, #20, G2) (Interview, March 14, 2005).

Traditional students who lived off campus

Among the traditional-aged students who lived off campus, there were some apparent themes. These students frequently described themselves as being from rural or suburban areas. Students who fit into this category consistently attributed their academic trouble to social or time-management problems. They frequently described problems with a parent, spouse or girl/boyfriend, co-worker, or similar important social relationship during the semester in which they experienced academic trouble.

The most influential [thing] on my everyday [life] has been my boyfriend, now ex-boyfriend. I hadn't had a boyfriend for the last three years of high school, and was fine with that. Came to college, and decided I wanted that. I got involved in a relationship and completely submerged myself. I wasn't doing all my homework or studying enough because of that relationship. To have someone in my life to take that away from me, or me to allow myself to have that taken away was really stressful. Breaking up and having a rough relationship drained me a lot. I didn't realize how dependent on that person I was, and how dependent I was on them needing me (Janet, #5, G2) (Interview, January 27, 2005).

All of these students were working, and viewed school as only one of several components that made up their daily responsibilities. They frequently described school as a priority, but admitted that they had trouble committing enough time to academic work, and described becoming frustrated in managing all the commitments they had made.

Non-residential, traditional-aged participants also found it difficult to work with some of their professors for various reasons. For example, five students interviewed in this study had trouble understanding their professors in class due to communication styles. Mike (#11, G2) made the observation: “I think they know the subject so well that they forget that whoever [*sic*] they are teaching to [*sic*] has never been exposed to the subject” (Interview, February 22, 2005). Others asserted that it was difficult to come to campus during professors’ office hours, and that Supplemental Instruction sessions were scheduled for inconvenient times.

Non-traditional students who were full-time and lived near campus

Non-traditional students form about 30% of the students who make up the SAS 100 academic probation population. One student population surfaced in this study that is typically not discussed in the retention literature: That is, the non-traditional students who lived in the area surrounding the campus who had moved there intentionally in order to make a significant life change. Frequently, they had just experienced a significant personal distress such as job lost or termination of marriage. However, these students were not involved in campus activities. Rather, they had hoped to find a community of their peers and intentionally moved to neighborhoods surrounding the campus. These students talked about the differences between living on-campus and living off-campus, and conveyed that they felt marginalized. They are not the type of undergraduate whom Light (2001) described in his research as appearing to have “fallen through the cracks” of the campus community. These students expressed the wish that the university would reach out to them. Steve (#15, G3) is a 25-year-old junior. He contended,

I think as a commuter student you really are left out of college life. I believe sometimes there is some animosity between students who are off-campus, who usually work, and people who live on-campus, who have parents looking out for them. It may not really be that way, but I think some ill will is there (Interview, January 19, 2005).

Josh (#8, G3) is 27-years-old, and he did not believe he had a college experience. Josh explained,

I just come to classes and struggle through my work on my own ... I had already moved out here ... because I wanted to be near college life. I wanted to be part of that kind of community.... Now the thing is, I am not involved in campus life at all, but I am part of the community that is part of campus (Interview, February 1, 2005).

Theresa (#16, G3) is a 28-year-old woman, who asserted,

I would say that there is a community of students on-campus and a community of students in the neighborhood surrounding campus that do not overlap much. [The university] has two student communities – the one that lives in the dorms and the one that lives in ...the other areas around campus. They are separate (Interview, February 7, 2005).

Steve (#15, G3), in his first interview, described how he recognized an academic weakness and suggested that he was working toward correcting it through an application of interdependence:

Well, to be honest, I didn't think I would go to college. An obstacle that stands between me and completing college really has been dealing with teachers that I do not understand because I have to be taught at a certain level because I really don't understand something the first time I hear it. But what has happened is that I almost always find another student in my class that understands everything that the professor said, and can explain it to me piece-by-piece, step-by-step. I have found that other students are always willing to help, really for no reason other

than to be nice or helpful. I didn't think that would happen. I thought that people would be more out for themselves (Interview, January 19, 2005).

Steve (#15, G3) also wanted someone to show him how to survive in college, and to include study skills, registration, and transportation in his survival plan.

Students in this group frequently had previous community college experience, much of it positive. Josh (#8, G3), who had earned an Associate in Arts degree from a small community college, stated,

A university is different from the community college, you know, it's broken up into different schools and there is different administrative buildings. It's really kind of confusing and you really don't have someone who just gives you advice about your own personal situation (Interview, March 23, 2005).

Similarly, individuals in this cohort frequently mentioned that they were challenged by a lack of familiarity with the university environment. Two students commented that they simply were not prepared from their previous institutions to expect the kind of experiences and challenges that they were currently facing at UNCG. Participants were confident that if they had been made aware of what awaited them at the university they would have been able to arrive better prepared to face those challenges. One student felt that not knowing people at the university, both students and faculty, was a barrier because it was difficult to participate fully in classes without any social connections to campus life.

Non-traditional students who were part-time

Four non-traditional students claimed that they simply had failed to withdraw appropriately when they stopped coming to class. As the spring 2005 SAS 100 classes

proceeded, three made appeals to have retroactive class withdrawals approved. One of these non-traditional students claimed that they were in good academic standing before the semester was over due to a retroactive class withdrawal being approved.

All of these non-traditional students expressed the desire to successfully complete their college degrees while balancing other responsibilities: “I know I do not want to be in school forever and my struggle was extremely difficult because I am a single mother with two children and I commute 80 minutes round trip” (Ellie, #18, G4) (Interview, January 28, 2005).

Non-traditional students also commented that colleges needed to do more to bridge the gap between nontraditional and traditional students. Kris (#21, G4), a 39-year-old African American woman, alleged, “The younger students have an attitude that mom and dad are paying for this and so I’ll just hang out here for a while.” She continued, “The younger students in class have to talk. I have even told them that some of us are here to learn” (Interview, January 27, 2005).

These older non-traditional students found it challenging to balance school, work, and family. When asked about their previous academic experience, they often regretted waiting so long to pursue their educational goals. Hope (#4, G3) is a 25-year-old mother of three. She said, “I wish I had come to school when I was younger, right after high school, and completed school then, but I don’t know if I would have appreciated it as much as I do” (Interview, February 21, 2005). Frank (#3, G4) expressed similar feelings, “I would like to think if I had it all to do over again, knowing what I know now, I would have gone the traditional route” (Interview, February 21, 2005).

Reasons for Being Placed on Academic Probation

Social Behavior

Based on interviews with the 23 participants in this study, it was noted that 10 participants (43%) attributed one of their major reasons for performing poorly enough to be placed on academic probation was the lack of proper social behavior on campus.

Among the 10 participants, seven of them (70%) reported that they were overwhelmed with the unexpected freedom in college, and they chose to party instead of to go to class. Each of these seven participants described the freedom they found in college and their difficulties in managing this freedom:

When I got to UNCG, I was overwhelmed with how much freedom they gave me. I didn't have to show up to class if I didn't feel like it. I had my own car and could go wherever I wanted to go. (#17, G1) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

With regret, all of the seven participants admitted that they often would do anything to avoid study:

I would find anything to do so that I would not study. I would sleep, watch TV, go out with friends, and so on. (#13, G2) (Journal Entry, March 10, 2005)

...we never did any schoolwork, we would just hang out and go out,... When my roommate was not around I would just hang out and watch TV all day. (#20, G2) (Journal Entry, March 10, 2005)

I always wanted to go out and hang with my friends than be stuck at home studying for school (#7, G3) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

Among the 10 participants, one reported having credit transfer problems (#16, G3), one had experienced family crisis (#8, G3), and another simply admitted that she did

not make an effort in certain courses because of her lack of passion for her declared major (#1, G1). Comparing participants from different groups, it was noted that no participant from Group 4 attributed his/her probation status to unexpected freedom at college or partying with friends.

Academic Preparedness

Based on the interview data collected in the study, lack of academic preparedness appeared to be the major self-reported reason for students performing poorly enough to be placed on probation. Out of 23 people who were interviewed, 15 (65%) discussed their lack of academic preparedness. Four of these 15 students reported that they were actually quite surprised at their final GPAs, because they always considered themselves high achievers when they were in high school:

I had always been considered a “smart” student. I had always made the honor roll and my GPA had never dropped below 3.7. (#17, G1) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

After graduating from high school with honors I thought that college was going to be all play and no work. (#22, G1) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

It was observed that all four students who claimed to be high achievers in high school were from Group 1.

The participants from Groups 2 and 3 appeared to attribute their lack of time management skills among the primary reasons for doing poorly enough to be placed on academic probation. In addition to having to balance school and other responsibilities, two students specifically expressed their regret in signing up for too many hours:

I was taking more hours than I needed to for my first semester, so almost every night I had to cram in everything I learned. (#11, G2) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

I took too many course[s] and could not handle them well enough to get the grades... (#15, G3) (Interview, January 19, 2005)

It was also noted that no participants from Group 4 attributed their reasons for probation to lack of academic preparedness.

Interdependence

Among the 23 students, only two (8.7%) attributed their academic probation to lack of interdependence. Both of them were from Group 2:

I learned the hard way and found out that if I wasn't doing well in a class I should have dropped it or received help from a tutor. (#11, G2) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

I found out that I am a really independent person, and I don't like getting help from others usually. I found that being independent can be a bad thing, as I did not want to get help with school work even though I really needed it. (#14, G2) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

Confidence

No participant in this study claimed lack of confidence as a reason for being on academic probation. On the contrary, it was observed throughout the interviews that all the participants appeared to have confidence in themselves.

Dedication

Two participants from Group 3 (8.7%) attributed their reasons for academic probation to lack of dedication:

Before taking this academic probation course I had never really set goals or a plan for myself. (#7, G3) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

All of the circumstances became too much, and I really had no ambition for school at all. I felt almost that I was a step away from being depressed. I had lost all my motivation to do well, not only in school but in anything. (#8, G3) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

Self-knowledge

Two out of the 23 participants (8.7%) explicitly stated that they had incorrect perceptions about themselves and their academic abilities prior to enrolling in SAS 100. Additionally, these students described how they did not really understand the concept of academic good standing, and the nature of a probationary academic status prior to enrolling in SAS 100 (#2, G1), and articulated that they had no notion as to what SAS 100 actually was until the first class meeting (#20, G2). Four additional participants (17%), all from Groups 3 and 4, expressed their confusion as to why they were placed on academic probation. The same four students also described their initial doubts in attending SAS 100:

I wasn't sure how this class was going to affect me and what it could really do to help me out. (#21, G4) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

I was thinking, "what in the world" "Am I in kindergarten or what?" "How could any of this possibly help me?" (#4, G3) (Journal Entry, March 15, 2005)

Research Question 3: Student Development of Academic Strategies

In order to answer the research question: "*How does the SAS 100 program facilitate students on academic probation to improve their academic strategies?*", both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the participants enrolled in SAS 100

during the spring 2005 semester. The quantitative data were collected using the Student Strategies for Success Survey instrument in a pre/post manner; the qualitative data were collected from student interviews and student journal entries during the spring 2005 semester.

This section describes the pre/post survey results obtained from all participants in the study. Then, survey results from the 23 interviewees comprising the four groups were analyzed to capture the impact of SAS 100 on students with various characteristics. A description of individual student interview findings was then provided to further address the research question.

Student Overall Development of Strategies for Success

The Student Strategies for Success Survey was used as the major instrument for data collection. This employs Likert-scale responses ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The survey instrument is composed of six major subscales: *Social Behavior, Academic Preparedness, Interdependence, Dedication, Self-knowledge, and Confidence*.

In order to measure the impact of the SAS 100 program on student overall development of academic strategies, a dependent t-test was conducted based upon the pre/post survey data.

Table 7. Means, standard deviations, and t-values of pre and post total survey scores

Pre		Post		t
\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
3.74	.54	3.98	.43	4.88*

$\alpha < .05$

As indicated in Table 7, the mean score for the pre-survey was 3.74, while the mean score for the post-survey was 3.98. The t-test results shown in Table 7 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference ($\alpha < .05$) between participants' pre- and post-survey responses.

The statistically significant difference found between participants' pre- and post-survey results demonstrated the impact the SAS 100 program had on participants' overall development of strategies for academic success.

In order to better understand participants' development after taking the SAS 100 class, a t-test was conducted to compare participants' development within each subscale. As indicated in Table 8, participants demonstrated statistically significant development in their academic preparedness in four of the six subscales.

Table 8. Means, standard deviations, and t-values of pre and post total subscale scores

Subscales	Pre		Post		t
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness	3.50	1.75	3.71	.61	1.65
Confidence	4.22	.53	4.38	.46	3.26*
Dedication	4.16	.78	4.26	.73	1.34
Interdependence	3.21	.75	3.42	.72	3.07*
Self-Knowledge	3.56	.70	3.98	.60	6.97*
Social Behavior	3.77	.67	4.05	.57	4.67*

* $\alpha \leq .008$

The following sections describe the participants' development of strategies for academic success within each of the six subscales.

Overall Student Development of Strategies for Academic Success

Social Behavior

On the survey instrument, items 14, 16, and 23 comprise the subscale regarding student social behavior. Based on the pre- and post-data from the survey, the reliability of this subscale was .786. A dependent t-test was conducted on these three items to compare the means of the pre- and post-responses. Table 9 reveals statistically significant differences between participants' pre- and post-responses on items 16 and 23. The difference between the pre- and post-responses on item 14 was not statistically significant.

When asked if they felt that there was at least one university employee who cared about their welfare (item 16) in the pre-survey, approximately 57% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The post-survey revealed that the percentage of people who agreed with the statement increased to 81%. In the pre-survey responses for the same question, 14% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while in their post-survey responses, the percentage dropped to 4%.

When asked if they felt the climate at the college allowed them to freely express their opinions and views (item 23), 60% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed in their pre-survey responses, while in their post-survey responses the percentage increased to 73%. Few participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in their pre-surveys (5%), and only four people disagreed with the statement in their post-survey responses.

Table 9. Means, standard deviations, and t-values of pre and post item scores with subscale reliabilities

Subscales	Item	Pre		Post		t
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Academic Preparedness $\alpha = .823$	15	3.42	.89	3.59	.75	2.08
	20	3.93	.86	3.85	.79	.23
	27	3.16	1.00	3.69	.85	5.95*
Confidence $\alpha = .753$	11	4.63	.616	4.58	.59	.77
	21	3.88	.86	4.11	.72	2.86*
	28	4.17	.84	4.37	.73	2.62
Dedication $\alpha = .697$	13	4.04	1.17	4.13	1.08	.83
	17	3.93	1.09	4.01	1.09	.84
	18	4.53	.69	4.64	.58	1.83
Interdependence $\alpha = .751$	12	3.24	1.10	3.44	1.00	1.99
	19	2.74	1.15	2.92	1.15	1.63
	24	3.67	.92	3.90	.81	2.72*
Self-Knowledge $\alpha = .752$	22	3.74	.91	4.30	.64	7.23*
	25	3.11	.97	3.61	.85	5.87*
	26	3.83	1.00	4.06	.93	2.49
Social Behavior $\alpha = .786$	14	3.94	.88	4.02	.74	.93
	16	3.62	1.02	4.16	.88	5.71*
	23	3.75	.83	3.99	.77	3.15*
$*\alpha \leq .002$				Overall $\alpha = .837$		

Although there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-survey responses on item 14, in which participants were asked about their comfort level in contacting their professors outside of the class, the number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement increased from 68% on the pretest to 78% on the posttest. In the post-survey responses, no participant in this study strongly disagreed with the statement.

In summary, the pre- and post-survey demonstrated a higher level of preparedness for academic success in terms of social behaviors. The results suggest that the individual conferences required for the SAS 100 program let participants feel more comfortable talking with university faculty and staff, and feel more confident in expressing their opinions. *Academic Preparedness*

The Academic Preparedness subscale consists of items 15, 20, and 27. The reliability of the subscale is .823. A t-test was conducted to compare the mean differences between pre- and post-responses.

Table 9 reveals a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-survey responses on item 27. No statistically significant difference was observed regarding items 15 and 20.

The pre-survey responses revealed that 44% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were always prepared for class (item 15), while in the post-survey, the number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement increased to 53%. In terms of their ability to study for different types of tests (item 27), the percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement increased from 39% to 64%. Although no statistically significant difference was noted, the percentage of participants who reported they knew how to concentrate in class (item 20) increased from 59% to 73%. Among the three survey items, item 27 revealed the greatest number of participants who disagreed or strongly disagreed that they knew how to study for different types of tests (27% compared to 11% and 12%). In the post-survey responses, only 10% of the participants still disagreed with the statement.

In summary, participants reported that they were better prepared academically after taking the SAS 100 course, especially in terms of preparing for classes and for different types of tests. Four-fifths of the participants reported they know how to concentrate in class, while almost all the students reported they did not know how to study for different types of tests before taking SAS 100.

Interdependence

The subscale Interdependence contains three items, 12, 19, and 24, whose reliability is .751. The results of the t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-responses on item 24 (Table 9).

When asked if they felt that they were part of a social network on campus (item 12), 39% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in their pre-survey responses, while in their post-surveys, the number increased to 49%. The number of participants who agreed that they are involved in activities on campus (item 19) increased from 21% to 32% after the SAS 100 program. It was also observed that a large number of participants (48%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (item 19) in their pre-survey responses. Although the number of participants who disagreed with this statement (item 19) dropped to 38% after taking SAS 100, it suggests that there are a relatively large number of students who are not involved in any campus activities. The majority of the participants in their pre-survey responses (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that they ask for help from others when needed (item 24). After taking SAS 100, the percentage increased to 70%.

In summary, participants indicated that they were more interdependent after taking SAS 100 and felt more connected to the campus. However, it is worth noting that a relatively large number of the participants continued to report that they are not involved in any campus activities.

Dedication

The subscale Dedication contains three items, 13, 17, and 18, whose reliability was .697. The t-test results indicated no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-survey responses on these three items (see Table 9).

Participants' pre- and post-responses were similar in that most of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have decided upon their major (76%), that they know what occupation they want to pursue (70%), and that they are committed to completing the degree (93%).

Self-knowledge

Items 22, 25, and 26 comprise the Self-knowledge subscale, whose reliability was .752. The results of the t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the pre-and post-survey results on items 22 and 25 (see Table 9).

Participants' pre-survey responses indicated that the majority of participants (66%) agreed or strongly agreed both that they know the resources available on campus (item 22), and that they have a clear picture of their long-term goals (item 26). Post-survey results revealed that the number of participants who reported that they know the available resources increased to 91%, and the number of participants who reported that they have a clear picture of their long-term goals increased to 75%.

When asked if they feel they balance school and other responsibilities effectively, however, most participants disagreed with the statement in the pre-survey, while only 32% agreed with the statement in the pre-survey. After taking SAS 100, 59% agreed or strongly agreed that they balance school and other responsibilities effectively.

In summary, it was evidenced that the SAS 100 program prepared participants to have better self-knowledge, especially in terms of balancing school and other responsibilities.

Confidence

The subscale Confidence includes items 11, 21, and 28, whose reliability was .753. Based on the t-test results, there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-responses for item 21 (see Table 9).

Based on the pre- and post-responses to items in this subscale, it was noted that participants in this study demonstrated high confidence before they attended the SAS 100 program, with 92% agreeing that a college education will enable them to attain their career and life goals (item 11), 73% agreeing that they know their academic strengths (item 21), and 80% agreeing that they are confident in their ability to succeed (item 28). After attending the SAS 100 classes, the number of participants who agreed with the potential of their college education to support their career and life goals increased to 94%, the number of participants who know their strengths increased to 83%, and the number of participants who are confident of their abilities increased to 87%.

In summary, participants demonstrated high confidence in themselves and in the value of their college education before they attended the SAS 100 classes. However, after the SAS 100 program, their confidence increased even further.

Impact of SAS 100 on Four Groups of Probation Students

In order to better understand the impact of the SAS 100 program on the individual student with various characteristics, the survey responses from the four groups that comprise the 23 interviewees were analyzed. There four groups included: traditional students who lived on campus (Group 1); traditional students who lived off campus (Group 2); non-traditional students living in the area immediately surrounding campus who were enrolled full-time (Group 3); and non-traditional commuting students who were enrolled part-time (Group 4). Group comparisons were then provided based on the pre- and post-survey responses.

Traditional students who lived on campus

Among the 23 interviewees, eight were categorized as Group 1 — traditional students living on campus.

As indicated in Figure 6, participants in Group 1 demonstrated improvement in all six subscales after taking SAS 100.

According to participants' pre-survey responses, it was noted that participants responded most positively in terms of Confidence ($\bar{X} = 4.33$). Participants also showed lack of Interdependence and Self-knowledge ($\bar{X} = 3.17$ and 3.29). After taking SAS 100 class, participants' development in Interdependence and Self-knowledge is evident. Further, the participants also responded more positively in terms of their dedication to

completing the degree and their confidence in their abilities. With relatively high scores in terms of Social Behavior ($\bar{X} = 3.96$), participants' responses in the post-survey remained high ($\bar{X} = 4.08$). While improvement in participant's Academic Preparedness was observed, the development appeared marginal based on their pre- and post-survey scores.

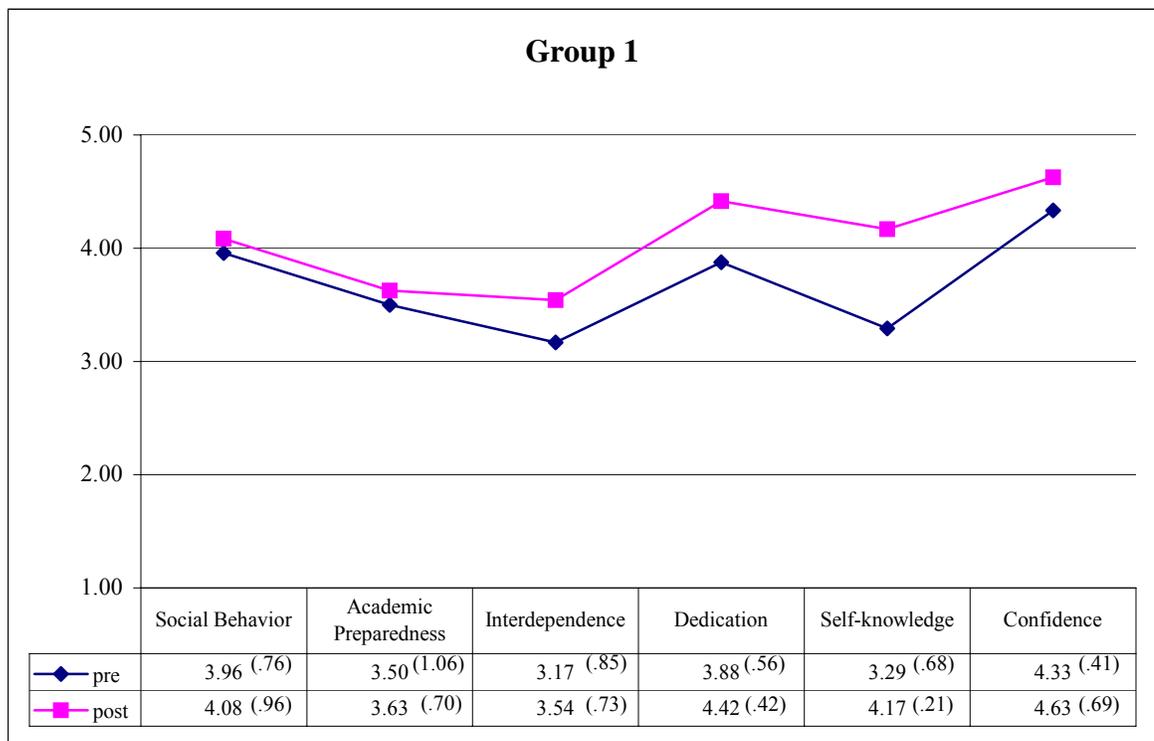


Figure 6. Pre and post subscale means and standard deviations of Group 1 participants

Traditional students who lived off campus

Six interviewees were categorized as Group 2 — traditional students living off campus.

According to Figure 7, participants indicated growth in all six subscales after taking the SAS 100 class, although their development in subscales regarding their Social Behavior, Academic Preparedness, and Interdependence was marginal.

Participants in this group responded most positively to items regarding Dedication ($\bar{X} = 3.90$) and Confidence ($\bar{X} = 3.95$). After taking SAS 100, participants' development in those two subscales was most apparent ($\bar{X} = 4.48$ and 4.29). Moreover, participants also demonstrated development in terms of their Self-knowledge.

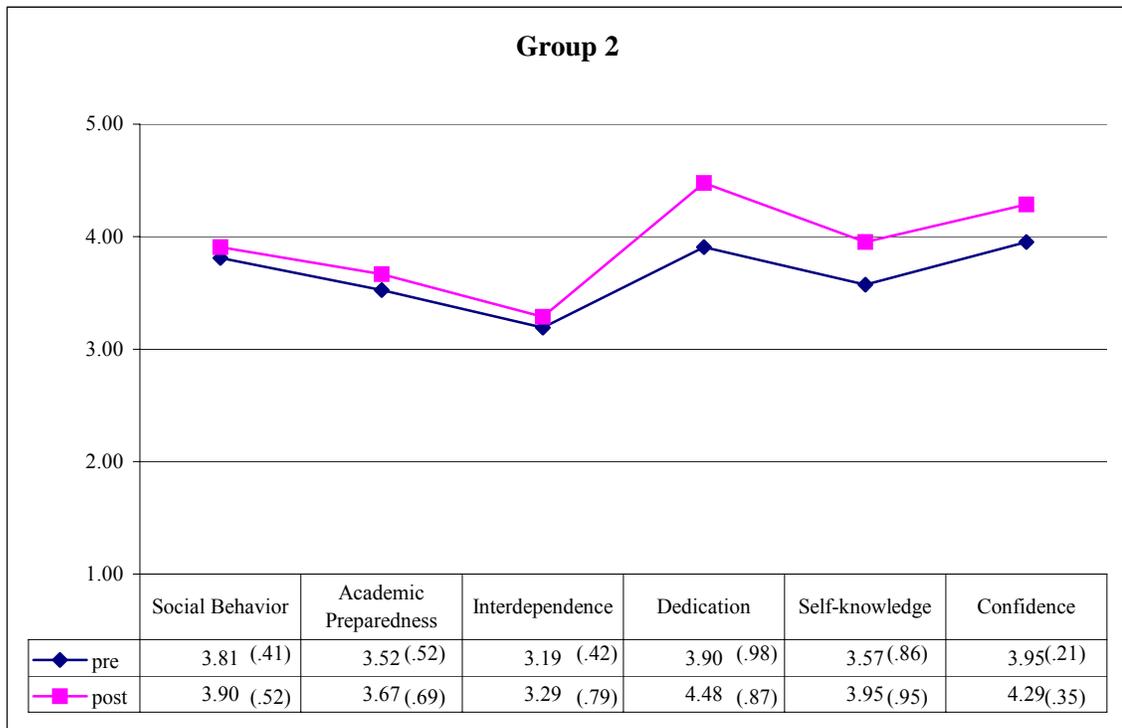


Figure 7. Pre and post subscale means and standard deviations of Group 2 participants

Although there was marginal development in participants' responses regarding their Academic Preparedness, participants' responses to items related to their Social Behavior and Interdependence remained the same after taking the SAS 100 class.

Non-traditional students who were full-time and lived near campus

Four participants among all the interviewees were categorized as Group 3 – Non-traditional students who were full-time and lived near campus.

As illustrated in Figure 8, participants indicated growth on four subscales after taking the SAS 100 class. However, their development in the Social Behavior subscale dropped and their scores for Dedication remained unchanged. Additionally, their development in Confidence was marginal.

Participants in this group responded most positively to items regarding Interdependence and Self-knowledge ($\bar{X} = 2.50$ and 3.33). After taking SAS 100, participants' development in those two subscales was most observable ($\bar{X} = 2.50$ and 3.92).

As with Groups 1 and 2, Group 3 participants also demonstrated development in terms of their Self-knowledge.

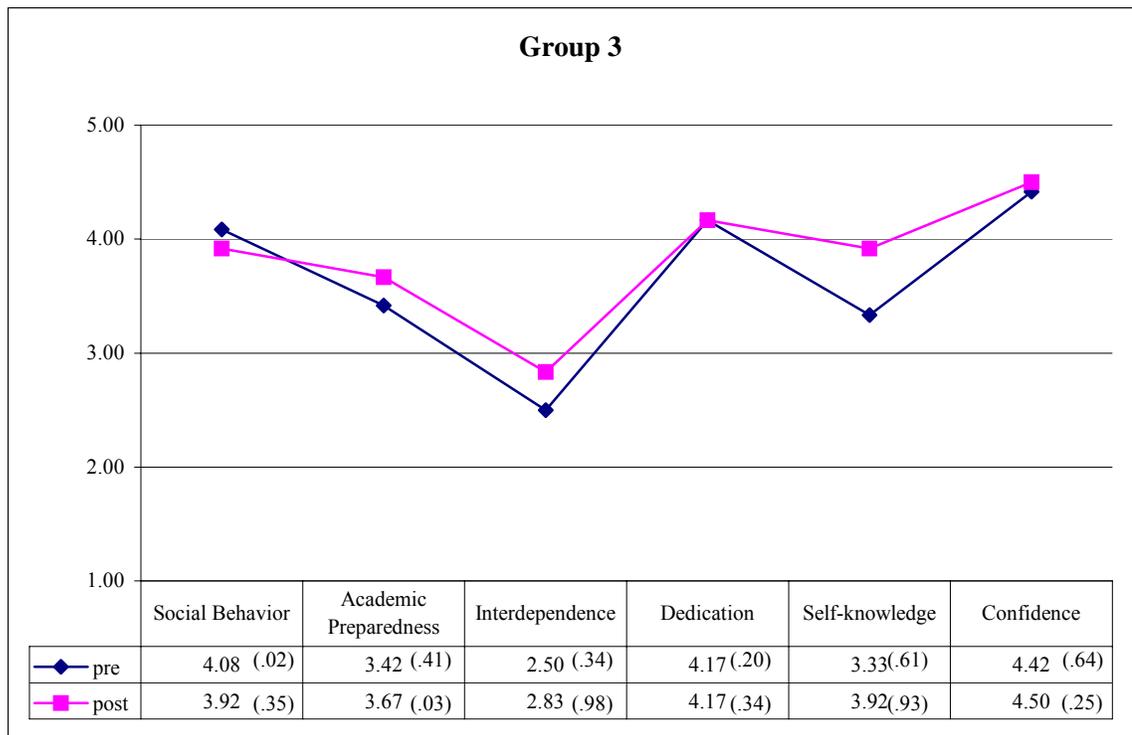


Figure 8. Pre and post subscale means and standard deviations of Group 3 participants

Non-traditional students who were enrolled part-time

Four interviewees were in Group Four – Non-traditional students who were enrolled part-time. On the pre-survey, these respondents responded most positively on Dedication ($\bar{X} = 4.33$) and Confidence ($\bar{X} = 4.33$), while their lowest scores were on the Academic Preparedness ($\bar{X} = 2.83$) and Interdependence ($\bar{X} = 2.33$) subscales. On the post-survey, as illustrated here, there was a marginal drop in Social Behavior from a $\bar{X} = 3.67$ to a $\bar{X} = 3.56$, and more striking decreases in Dedication (from a $\bar{X} = 4.33$ to a $\bar{X} = 4.04$) and Confidence (from a $\bar{X} = 4.33$ to a $\bar{X} = 4.13$) scores, between the pre- and post-surveys. Conversely, there were dramatic increases in Academic Preparedness (from a $\bar{X} = 2.83$ to a $\bar{X} = 3.42$) and Interdependence (from a $\bar{X} = 2.33$ to a $\bar{X} = 3.17$)

subscales. There are marginal increases in Self-knowledge (from a $\bar{X} = 3.75$ to a $\bar{X} = 3.90$).

The apparent difference in the responses between Group 4 and the other three groups suggests that either the intervention is not appropriate for this population, or perhaps the intervention is causing these Group 4 representatives to reconsider their previous dedication and confidence commitments. However, the group is too small to draw any definite conclusions.

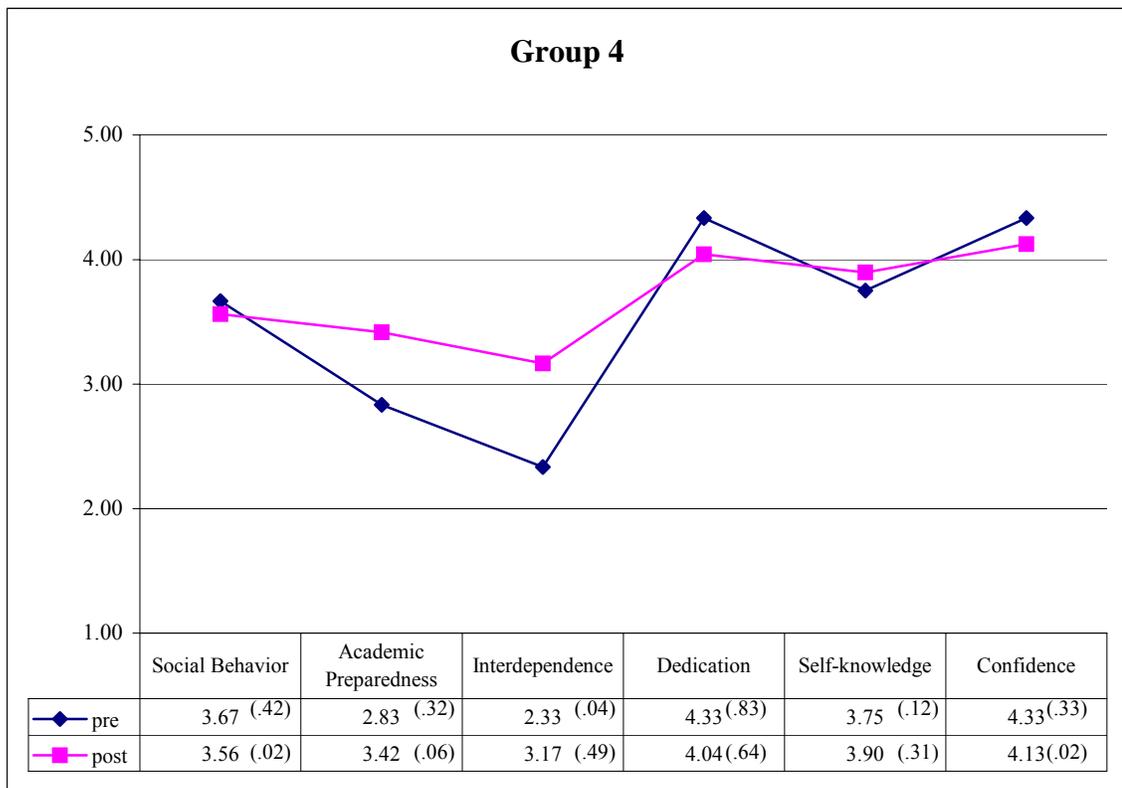


Figure 9. Pre and post subscale means and standard deviations of Group 4 participants

Group Comparison

In both the pre- and post-surveys, interview participants from all four groups tended to score higher in Dedication and in Confidence than in other areas. Similarly, the interview participants tended to score lowest in Interdependence overall. While this trend was consistent, there were gains in all three subscales on the pre- and post-surveys.

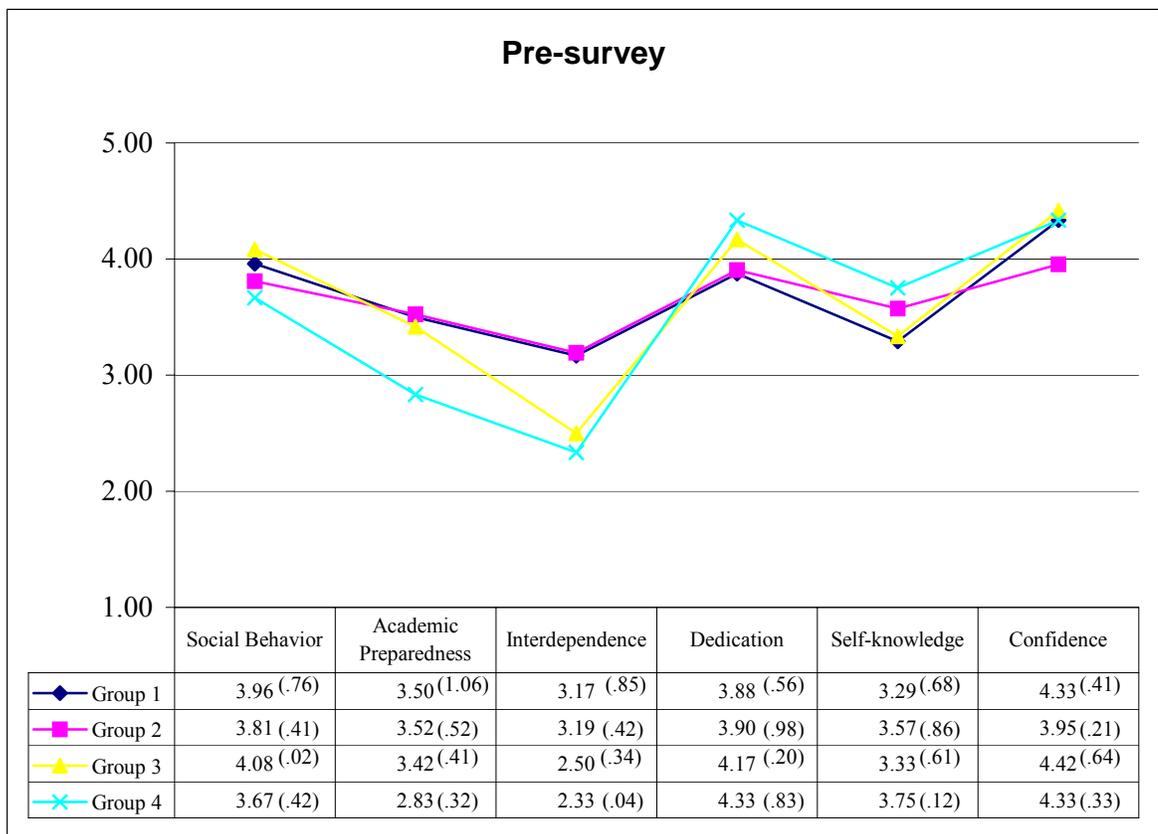


Figure 10. Pre-survey subscale means and standard deviations among interview participants across the four groups

On the pre-survey, Group 2 scored the highest in the areas of Academic Preparedness and Interdependence. Group 3 scored the highest in Social Behavior and Confidence, and Group 4 scored highest in Dedication and Self-knowledge. On the other

hand, Group 1 scored lowest in the areas of Dedication and Self-knowledge. Group 4 scored lowest on Social Behavior and Interdependence, while Group 3 scored lowest on Academic Preparedness, and Group 2 scored lowest on Confidence.

Overall, the respondents scored low on both Academic Preparedness and Interdependence, with overall means of 2.88 and 2.80 respectively. The respondents scored highest on Dedication and Confidence, with overall means of 4.07 and 4.26 respectively.

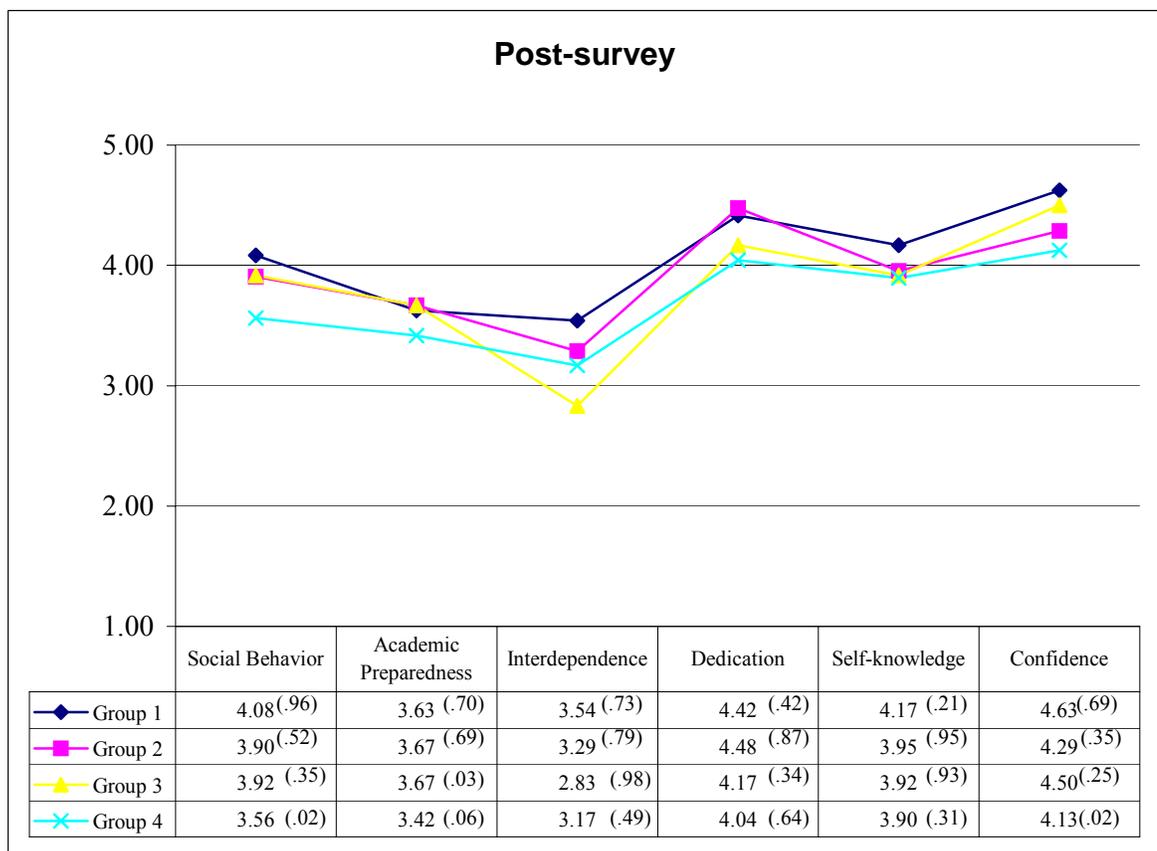


Figure 11. Post-survey subscale means and standard deviations among interview participants across the four groups

On the post-survey, Group 1 had the highest scores on four subscales: Social Behavior, Interdependence, Self-Knowledge, and Confidence. This is especially dramatic, because Group 1 initially had the lowest scores in all six subscales, and consequentially has made the greatest gains on the posttest. Group 2 had the highest score on Dedication ($\bar{X} = 4.48$), and tied with Group 3 for the highest score on Academic Preparedness ($\bar{X} = 3.67$). It is worth noting that for all four groups, although there were gains on the subscale, Interdependence still remained their weakest area.

Group 4 scored lowest in five of the six subscales: Social Behavior, Academic Preparedness, Dedication, Self-knowledge, and Confidence. Among the groups, Group 3 scored lowest on Interdependence.

It is also worth noting that on the subscale for Confidence, respondents from all four groups scored high on both the pre- and post-surveys, with a gain of only .15. Similarly, respondents from all four groups scored high on Dedication, with a gain of .21. This supports earlier quantitative and qualitative findings suggesting that dedication to career and degree, and confidence of personal and academic success are typically not a problem for students on academic probation. Conversely, while there were substantial gains on both subscales for all groups, Academic Preparedness and Interdependence remained the lowest areas for all groups.

Individual Development of Strategies for Academic Success

Social Behavior

Consistent with the quantitative findings of the study, individuals' comments revealed that participants felt more comfortable expressing their opinions and contacting

staff members for help after going through the SAS 100 program. In one journal entry, Ellie (#18, G6) mentioned: “Being in SAS 100 taught me that I can speak up and get help if I am willing to look for it” (Interview, March 12, 2005). Ben (#23, G4) asserted in her interview that: “Thanks to this course I learned that there are a lot of programs UNCG has to offer, and all you have to do is take advantage of them” (Interview, March 30, 2005). When asked what advice she would give to a student who has just gone on academic probation, Chris (#19, G1) said: “My advice to you is to take advantage of these programs and to not be afraid to ask for help because there are plenty of people willing to give you a hand” (Interview, March 10, 2005).

Joy (#9, G2) commented that she began college as a pre-med major. She did not know what classes to take, did not know how to identify her advisor, and ended up doing poorly in difficult classes she was not prepared to take. She says she was “stubborn” for not trying to find anyone to help her, but that participation in the SAS 100 course led her to seek out an advisor and make a change in her major. Now that she has an advisor and a new major, she feels more connected to the institution and feels confident in her academic decisions.

However, not all participant outcomes were positive which is supported in the literature by Schlossberg who stated, “transitions may lead to growth, but decline is also a possible outcome, and many transitions may be viewed with ambivalence by the individuals experiencing them” (Evans et al, 1998, p. 112). Sammy (#22, G1), for example, wished that student affairs staff “would actually counsel students instead of lecturing. I could use someone to tell me I can do it and to encourage me” (Interview,

March 15, 2005). In addition to the contrasting perspectives among students, this study uncovered ambivalence within the same participant. Mo (#13, G2) maintained,

I had an advisor that I felt treated me rudely because of my low grades, but [because of a recommendation from their SAS 100 instructor] I was lucky to find an advisor from academic services, he has been willing to help me get back on track and I still call on him ... even though I now have an advisor in my own department (Interview, March 18, 2005).

Academic Preparedness

After taking the SAS 100 class, 21 of the participants reported that they were better prepared for college classes. It was noted that participants appeared to be more aware of the academic expectations in college and to better understand their own academic weakness after taking the SAS 100 class.

Given that learning to negotiate the academic system was a theme in the first set of interviews, seven students expressed that they were now more empowered in this area. Angie (#1, G1) indicated "I'm learning more about what's being offered now that I am about to be kicked out when I should've known about it my first week here" (Interview, March 12, 2005). Students also felt that they had a much better understanding of the UNCG degree audit system, by using online tools such as "CAPP" (Curriculum, Advising and Program Planning) and the "what-if analysis" in UNCGenie to monitor progress toward their degree. The UNCGenie system allows students to engage in online, automated administrative services such as registering for courses, adding and dropping courses, viewing academic records, changing personal information, and changing personal identification numbers. CAPP is an on-line degree evaluation system available

to students through UNCGenie, which may be used to compare the graduation requirements for specific majors and general education requirements with the student's current academic record. CAPP determines if each specific requirement has been met and what additional requirements are still needed. The results are displayed in a clear, concise manner over the web inside UNCGenie for viewing by the student and/or advisor. The “what-if analysis” allows students to compare their completed coursework against the requirements for any major offered by the university in order to evaluate the impact that changing majors may have on progress toward completing their degree. Eight students indicated that with their knowledge of these online tools, they have a clearer understanding of degree requirements.

Additionally, students described that they finally understood how to calculate their GPAs, and predict what grades they would need to earn in order to reach a targeted term with a specific cumulative GPA.

Interdependence

Of the 23 participants, 12 described having found a peer group in the SAS 100 class. Vanessa (#17, G1) declared:

When I started SAS 100 I wouldn't tell anybody what class I was going to once a week because I felt that people might think I am stupid...In the class we had a lot of interaction with one another, learned more about each person and what our weaknesses are which led to why we were on academic probation...I found that I was not alone, other people are having the same problem that I am (which made me feel a whole lot better) (Journal Entry, March 30, 2005).

Chris (#19, G1) said, “We were kind of like a support group... not to say that misery loves company but we helped each other to feel less like failures” (Interview, March 14, 2005). Likewise, Steve (#15, G3) maintained,

One misconception I had when I got into the class was that the people in there were going to be a lot different from me, people that actually didn't care about their work. I was so wrong. There people are just like me, all regular people, easy to get along with, easy to talk to, cool people (Interview, March 30, 2005).

However, while students reported on the post-survey that that they had become more interdependent, and they indicated in their comments that they had identified a peer group in the SAS 100 class, this may not be enough to suggest that they are successfully building a support network outside of class. Comments describing evidence of interdependence beyond the SAS 100 group were subtler. For example, Shane (#14, G2) stated during the first interview: “I think what I really needed was for someone to sit down and show me how to survive in college... it feels sometimes like I was just sort of pushed out of the boat and told to swim” (Interview, January 24, 2005). In his second interview he said in reference to his roommate,

We never hung out at first but we eventually did. So, I got to know some of his friends... Actually, they had all been here a while and they were able to tell me things like where to get videos on campus, who the best math tutor in Bryan [was], and all. Finally, [the roommate] was able to help me out when I needed a ride to work (Interview, March 30, 2005).

His comments in his second interview reflected a change from feeling overwhelmed in college to believing that he had found a support network.

Joe (#7, G2) described a change in his relationship with his parents. He stated that his parents have helped him change, and while many students shy away from parents, he has grown closer to them. Joe (#7, G2) stated, “they’ve really stuck with me” (Interview, February 28, 2005). He described how they are dependable, unlike friends. This response demonstrated that this student may have turned to friends in the past, but did not find support among them. Now he turns to his parents for help, which may exemplify interdependence. Similarly, Janet (#5, G2) described how she became independent after leaving home, “Being on my own and not having my mom here is a good thing ... You find out a lot about yourself.” After beginning college, she entered a long romantic relationship that ended. Janet (#5, G2) reflected, “I didn’t realize how dependent on that person I was, and how dependent I was on them needing me” (Interview, March 30, 2005), which may indicate movement toward interdependence.

Another student, Jim (#6, G1), described how his supervisor had the greatest impact on his life during the Spring 2005 semester. Jim’s supervisor helped him out financially, gave him advice and guidance, and most importantly, allowed him to set his own work schedule. Since his job does not require structured hours, he has been able to make classes and schoolwork his priority, fitting in time at work around school-related obligations. While his supervisor appears to have served as a mentor to him, Jim’s success in developing this relationship indicates that he has become more adept at constructing interdependent relationships.

Dedication

For the most part, SAS 100 students indicated that their major and career goals have been reinforced and better refined as a result of this course, or they have made adjustments to their intended major or career path based on insights gained through class activities. As Shane (#14, G2) asserted, “Before taking this academic probation course I had never really set goals or a plan for myself. I would just do enough work in my classes to get me by” (Interview, March 8, 2005).

Self-knowledge

A central purpose of the SAS 100 program is to help students generate a profile of their best learning style, study-skills strategies, study habits, customary accommodations, and needs based upon their past experiences and perceptions.

This academic profile is at the core of the student’s academic recovery process. Appreciative Inquiry is used to identify and build upon each student’s best habits and academic strengths so that they can recover rapidly.

Before you really get into the class you have to figure out why you are here. Ask yourself, what were the factors that made me do so poorly last semester? Also ask, do I want to continue in my studies and turn myself around so I can do so? If you had no answer to either of these questions you might want to ‘dig deep’ inside yourself and find them, or take a while to collect your thoughts. When you find the answers this class is the place you want to be (Angie, #1, G1) (Journal Entry, March 8, 2005).

Jane (#20, G2) commented that college was primarily about developing self-knowledge and that SAS 100 merely was an extension of that process.

If someone had come to my high school, and said ‘you may not believe me now, but you are going to learn a lot about yourself. You are going to experience many things for the first time’, I would have been a lot less nervous... if someone had told me I’ve been there, it is going to be okay, and it works out in the end, it would have helped (Interview, April 1, 2005).

In general, students indicated that they became more familiar with how they learn best, and developed some strategies for planning, completing, and evaluating projects in a reasonable amount of time. Janet (#5, G2) described actively reshaping her environment, creating a permanent study area in her apartment that would only be used for academic work. Mark (#10, G1) believed he was weak at math but perceived himself as an organized, systematic writer; while taking a college algebra course, he started to write out in words the steps in which he needed to engage in order to solve an equation. The student was convinced this approach helped him to pass the course with an above average grade.

Confidence

Student comments indicated that confidence was built in two primary ways through the SAS 100 program. First, students became adept at developing reasonable, achievable sets of tasks that helped them accomplish their weekly academic goals. Short-term success experienced with this technique helped them become more confident so that they could ultimately succeed academically and graduate from college. Second, students were able to re-identify the academic strengths that led them to college to begin with, rather than dwell upon academic weaknesses that became apparent after they enrolled at UNCG.

Being in SAS for the 8 weeks at the beginning of the semester will help you gain confidence and wisdom which will help you to move from being a sleep-all-day victim, into a prepared, motivated, and organized creator (you'll learn those terms in about a week!) (#19, G1) (Journal Entry, March 8, 2005).

Another thing I learned was not to overload myself. I do not want to be in school forever, but I learned what good is it to rush through if you are failing along the way. ... Not only am I more confident in myself, but I have more achievable goals, more knowledge and a lot more resources at my fingertips... This class is the best thing that could have happened to me and I am grateful that it exists (#23, G4) (Journal Entry, March 10, 2005).

Summary

Based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected to answer the research questions, this study described the characteristics of the students on probation, explored the reasons that students provided to explain what they had done that placed them on academic probation, and discussed the impact the SAS 100 program had on the participants' development of strategies for academic success.

Characteristics of Probation Students

In this study, participants' descriptive data were collected using the Student Strategies for Success survey. Based on the data collected from participants enrolled in SAS 100 classes during the spring 2005 semester, it was noted that the composition of the academic probation student population generally represented the student population at UNC-Greensboro. No student group identified by gender, age, and/or ethnicity was observed to be more likely to be placed on academic probation.

In comparing participants' pre-survey responses, it was noted that male participants appeared to have higher self-perception of their confidence, interdependence,

and academic well-preparedness than female participants. African American participants, in particular, were observed to have higher self-perception of their dedication to completing the degree. In comparing transfer students to non-transfer students, non-transfer students demonstrated higher self-perception of their interdependence. Among the 279 participants of this study, 30% of them reported that they had previous community college experiences. This group of students was found to have higher dedication and better self-knowledge compared to those students who did not have such experiences.

Reasons for Students going on Probation

As noted from the pre-survey findings, participants' previous experiences and their residential status seemed to have had an impact on their understanding of different strategies for academic success. Based on the 23 individual interview transcripts and participant journal entries, four cohort groups of probation students were identified: 1). Traditional students who live on campus; 2). Traditional student who live off campus; 3). Non-traditional students who are part-time; 4). Non-traditional students who were full time and live near campus.

For traditional students who lived on campus, it was noted in the interviews that they had found a group of supportive friends in their residence communities. This group of students also tended to focus on their academic problems and frustrations when talking about their college learning experiences. Most of the participants in this group attributed their academic probation status to their lack of study skills, and to having poor study habits. On the other hand, for the traditional students who live off-campus, time

management, personal relationships, and work concerns seemed to be the major problems. This group of students reported that they found it difficult to work with some of their professors. Most non-traditional, part-time students involved in this study claimed that they were on probation because they had forgotten to withdraw when they decided to stop attending class. Most participants from this group found it difficult to balance their responsibilities at school, work, and home. The group of non-traditional full-time students who live close to campus expressed their need to be more connected to campus activities and be more aware of information related to becoming part of the campus community. The four cohorts of probation students were noted as being distinct groups in this study in regard to their previous experiences, their residential status, and their self-perceived reasons for being placed on academic probation.

Comparing the students from the four different groups, it was observed that the reasons for students doing poorly enough to be placed on academic probation vary across the groups. The lack of appropriate social behavior appeared to be one of the major reasons for academic probation. In this study, 43% of the participants attributed one of their major reasons which caused them to be placed on academic probation was the lack of proper social behavior on campus. However, none of the participants from Group 4 attributed their probation status to unexpected freedom at college or partying with friends. Further, lack of academic preparedness was another major reason which led to being placed on probation (65%). While participants from Group 1 appeared to be high achievers in their high school and attributed their probation status to lack of effort, participants from Groups 2 and 3 appeared to place their lack of time management skills

among the primary reasons for being placed on probation. No participants from Group 4 attributed their reason for probation to lack of academic preparedness. Moreover, two participants from Group 2 reported lack of interdependence as a reason leading to probation; and two participants from Group 3 reported lack of dedication among their reasons. Among the participants from Group 3 and Group 4, 44% attributed their probation status to their lack of self-knowledge, while very few participants from Group 1 or Group 2 considered that a reason. No participant in this study considered lack of confidence among his or her reasons leading to academic probation.

Student Development of Academic Strategies

Based on the pre- and post-survey data collected over the course of the spring 2005 semester, it was evident that all participants demonstrated development in their self-perception of their social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence.

In terms of participants' social behavior, participants responded more positively when asked if there were university employees who cared about their opinions, and if the climate at the college allowed them to freely express their opinions and views after taking SAS 100 classes. In addition, by the semester's end, more participants reported that they felt comfortable contacting their professors outside of class than they did at the semester's beginning. The qualitative findings from participant interviews and journal entries confirmed these quantitative findings. Participants' comments revealed that they felt more comfortable expressing their opinions and contacting staff members or professors after taking the SAS 100 classes than before.

Further, participants reported better academic preparedness after taking the SAS 100 classes. Most of the participants stated that they were better prepared academically at the end of the semester than before, with four-fifths of the respondents indicating improvement specifically in terms of preparing for classes and for different types of tests. Participants were noted as being more aware of the academic expectations in college and as having a better understanding of their own academic weakness after taking the SAS 100 class. The review of the academic policies and support system at UNC-Greensboro was described as helpful in increasing participants' awareness of their academic options.

As for interdependence, most participants indicated that they felt more connected to the campus after taking the SAS 100 class. It was observed, however, that 48% of the participants continued to report that they were not involved in campus activities. Based on participant interviews, it was noted that participants described having found a cohort in the SAS 100 class, which appears to have led to the improvement in their other relationships outside of class.

In analyzing the difference between the pre- and post-survey scores, no statistical significance was noted on the items regarding participants' dedication. At the beginning of the SAS 100 class, most of the participants responded very positively when asked about their major (76%), future occupation (70%), and their commitment to completing the degree (93%). The qualitative data supported the quantitative findings. Only two interviewees indicated that they had lacked dedication, and the remainder indicated that after taking the SAS 100 their selection of major and career goals had been reinforced and better defined

Based on the pre- and post-survey responses on the subscale regarding participants' self-knowledge, it was evident that the participants were aware of the resources available on campus and that they had a clearer picture of their long-term goals. After reviewing participants' journal entries and talking with participants individually, the researcher found that the major purpose of SAS 100, which was to help students generate a profile of their best learning styles, study skills, study habits, and customary accommodations, was achieved.

Although the participants involved in the study were all on academic probation, they demonstrated high confidence in their academic abilities before taking the SAS 100 class. The SAS 100 program appears to have increased their confidence in a significant manner. Participants tended to build their confidence in two major ways through the SAS 100 program: 1). developing reasonable, achievable sets of tasks; and 2). identifying their academic strengths.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed the impact of the SAS 100 program on participants' development of strategies for academic success. Further, the Student Strategies for Success survey proved to be a reliable instrument in measuring the development of students on probation ($\alpha = .837$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was threefold: 1) to describe the characteristics of college students on academic probation at UNCG; 2) to depict the major reasons for students going on academic probation; and 3) to measure the effectiveness of the SAS 100 program on student retention, student achievement, and student self-improvement.

The general research question for this study was “What is the impact of the motivational/empowerment model implemented at UNCG on academic probation students?” The following specific research questions were discussed:

1. What are the major social and academic characteristics of students on academic probation at UNCG?
2. What are the major reasons for students performing poorly enough academically to be placed on academic probation at UNCG?
3. How does the SAS 100 program facilitate students on academic probation to improve their academic strategies?

Both quantitative data and qualitative data were collected to address the three research questions. The *Student Strategies for Success Survey* was administered in a pre/post manner. The data collected from the pre-surveys were analyzed to capture the demographic features of students on academic probation, and the comparison between the pre- and post-survey results demonstrated the effectiveness of the SAS 100 program on

students' self-improvement strategies for their academic success. Qualitative data were collected using individual student interviews and student journal entries. The qualitative data were analyzed in correspondence with the six survey subscales to identify the major self-reported reasons for being placed academic probation and to further illustrate the students' experiences in the SAS 100 program.

This chapter discusses the major findings based on the results obtained from the three research questions. The implications of the findings for student retention efforts, student orientation, and student advising are discussed. Recommendations are made for facilitating student decision-making in order to enhance student retention. Finally, the limitations of this study are addressed and suggestions are provided for future research.

Discussion of the Results

Data collected using the *Student Strategies for Success Survey* from participants enrolled in SAS 100 classes during the spring 2005 semester led to several observations concerning the characteristics of UNCG students on academic probation. It was noted that there were no difference among the special student group in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity who fell on academic probation. Further, in comparing participants' preparedness in forming strategies for academic success prior to taking the SAS 100 class, it was observed that male participants appear to have had higher self-perception of their confidence, interdependence, and academic well-preparedness than female participants. African American participants, in particular, were observed as having higher self-perception of their dedication to completing the degree. Students who had previous

community college experiences were found to have higher dedication and better self-knowledge compared to those students who did not have such experiences.

As evidenced in the pre-survey findings, participants' previous experiences and their residential status seemed to have been related to their development of different strategies for academic success. Based on the 23 individual interview transcripts and participant journal entries, four cohort groups of probation students were identified: 1). Traditional-aged residential students; 2). Traditional-aged students who lived off campus; 3). Non-traditional students who were part-time; 4). Non-traditional students who were full-time and who lived in communities surrounding the campus. These four groups appear to be distinctive for several reasons. Individuals described themselves as such without prompting, and identified members of their peer groups with the same characteristics. Of particular interest is the fourth group of students, who were of non-traditional age and describe themselves as having concerns and pursuing behaviors typically associated with traditional-aged students. This fourth group of students has not been acknowledged in the literature. However, there were too few students in the groups contained in the present study to attempt an analysis of impact at the group level in a way that is generalizable.

Although the participants were categorized into four distinct groups, the researcher also observed similarities among the groups. For example, the non-traditional students who were full-time, who lived close to campus, and who were seeking out a more traditional collegiate experience made comments similar to those provided by the traditional-age commuter students, but the traditional-age students who lived on campus

described a college experience quite different from the traditional-age commuters. This may suggest that the practice of associating student needs with age ranges may be inadequate and does not sufficiently take into account attributes such as living arrangement and external commitments. This study revealed that the relationship between student age and campus support may not be as simple as many researchers and higher education professionals assume, and that unique populations of students may exist among the conventional age and ethnic groupings.

The study's four cohorts of probation students were noted as being distinct groups in regard to their previous experiences, their residential status, and their self-perceived reasons for being placed on academic probation. Comparing the students from the four categories, it was observed that the reasons students gave for failing to meet academic standards and being placed on probation varied across the four groups.

For traditional students who lived on campus, the interviews revealed that they had found a group of supportive friends in their residence communities. This group of students also tended to focus on their academic problems and frustrations when talking about their college learning experiences. Most of the participants in this group attributed their academic probation status to their lack of good study skills and habits. In contrast, for the traditional students who lived off-campus, time management, personal relationships, and work concerns seem to have been the major problems. This group of students reported that they found it difficult to work with some of their professors because of different communication styles or challenges in scheduling time to meet with professors outside of class.

The study's non-traditional part-time students frequently claimed that they were on academic probation because they had forgotten to formally withdraw when they felt it was necessary to stop attending class. Most participants from this group found it difficult to balance their responsibilities at school, work, and home. Their comments suggest that there may be a number of methods that might be used to head off academic trouble. For example, these students seem to have been the least likely to understand the procedures and regulations governing the pursuit of a degree at UNCG. They admitted that they had confounded their understanding of UNCG requirements with those of other institutions they had previously attended. Further, they frequently were unaware of deadlines for dropping courses, and they were unsure as to how to submit appeals for grade changes. Orientation sessions that emphasize the correct procedures would have been of value to these students. Conversely, traditional-age residential students tended to have had significant knowledge of academic policies and procedures, while traditional-age commuters seemed to have had some grasp of this information. Meanwhile, the group of non-traditional full-time students who lived close to campus seemed to have had little concern for academic policies, but expressed their need to be more connected to campus activities and to be more aware of information related to becoming part of the campus community.

The lack of appropriate social behavior appeared to have been one of the major reasons for students not meeting minimum academic standards which resulted in them being placed on probation. In this study, 43% of the participants attributed one of their major reasons for not meeting academic standards to their lack of proper social behavior

on campus. However, none of the participants from Group 4 attributed their probation status to unexpected freedom at college or partying with friends. Further, lack of academic preparedness was another major reason cited for being placed on probation (65%). While participants from Group 1 appeared to have been high achievers in high school and attributed their probation status to lack of effort, participants from Groups 2 and 3 attributed academic probation to their lack of time management skills. No participants from Group 4 attributed their academic probation to lack of academic preparedness. Moreover, two participants from Group 2 reported the lack of interdependence among their reasons for probation, and two participants from Group 3 reported their lack of dedication as a primary reason. Most participants (44%) from Group 3 and Group 4 attributed their probation status to their lack of self-knowledge, while very few participants from Group 1 or Group 2 considered that a reason. No participant in this study considered lack of confidence as a major reason for being placed on probation.

The findings from the third research question demonstrated that the SAS 100 program had a strong positive impact on the participants' perception of their social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence.

In terms of participants' social behavior, after taking SAS 100, participants responded more positively when asked if there were university employees who cared about their opinions, and if the climate at the college allowed them to freely express their opinions and views. In addition, by the end of the semester, more participants reported

that they felt comfortable contacting their professors outside of class. Further, participants also reported better academic preparedness after taking SAS 100. Most of the participants stated that they were better academically prepared, especially in terms of preparing for classes and for different types of tests. Moreover, most participants in this study indicated that they felt more connected to the campus after taking the SAS 100 class. It was observed, however, that most of the participants reported that they were not involved in campus activities. Most of the participants responded very positively when asked about their major, future occupation, and their commitment to completing the degree, at the end of the SAS 100 class. Finally, based on the pre- and post-survey responses on the subscale regarding participants' self-knowledge, it was evident that the participants were more aware of resources available on campus and had a clearer picture of their long-term goals as a result of completing SAS 100.

Qualitative findings from participant interviews and journal entries confirmed the quantitative findings. Participants' comments revealed that they felt more comfortable expressing their opinions and contacting staff members or professors after taking the SAS 100 classes. Further, participants described having found a cohort in the SAS 100 class, which appears to have led to improvement in other relationships outside of class. After taking the SAS 100 class, most participants reported that their selection of major and career goals had been reinforced and better defined. Based on participants' journal entries and interviews, the researcher found that the major purpose of SAS 100, which is to help students generate a profile of their best learning styles, study skills, study habits, and customary accommodations, was achieved.

Implications of the SAS 100 Program

Implications for Student Retention Efforts

As illustrated through the results of the three research questions, the SAS 100 program was effective in assisting the students' academic recovery. The findings from this study confirmed the researcher's proposition that the SAS 100 empowerment/motivational model is effective in improving those student attributes related to academic success, and helped the researcher better understand the needs and concerns of academic probation students.

This study has contributed to our understanding of college student persistence and success. Historically, students who had taken SAS 100 have had improved retention and improved GPAs compared to students who had not. However, those former data were at too limited a level to explain the impact of the program. A model of six college student attributes – social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence – comprising a profile of academic success was proposed. After several iterations, an instrument was developed that effectively measured these attributes. In this study, the instrument was used to provide evidence supporting the existence of these attributes and illustrated the impact of the SAS 100 program on them.

The instrument itself is a useful addition to the tools available for exploring student academic success and persistence. This is an application of Samejima's Graded Response Model to develop a pool of highly informative items for collecting information about the impact of student success programming. The use of the Graded Response Model to provide precision to the instrument has not been attempted in any previous

study. The most recent version of the instrument is currently being tested with other populations to collect data for preventive interventions in academic recovery efforts.

Additionally, this study uncovered evidence indicating that the non-traditional student population contains a subset of students who have previously been overlooked in the literature. While there is a rich literature on the experiences and retention of traditional-age residential students, traditional-aged commuters, and non-traditional commuters, there has been little written on the non-traditional adult student population identified in this study, i.e., students who were enrolled full-time, who had college work as the major focus in their life, and who deliberately moved to communities close to campus. This finding suggests further exploration of an intricacy in the adult student population.

The SAS 100 Program in Student Orientation

Ideally, there would be no need for academic recovery programs such as SAS 100, if student support professionals would provide students with resources before the need is realized. Consequently, orientation is the first step in promoting student persistence. This study of students on academic probation after their first semester in college revealed the existence of four distinct groups of first-year college students with very different needs, suggesting that differing support mechanisms are required in order to promote student persistence and academic success. Many campuses have student orientation courses; however, students may benefit more if orientation courses contained various formats and content targeted to these different student groups, as well as the instructors of these courses considering the diversity of their students' needs.

This study revealed that those traditional-age students who lived on campus frequently indicated substantial academic success in high school. However, they also described their difficulty in studying effectively, managing their time, balancing their social activities with their academic commitments, and estimating the amount of work necessary to perform well in their classes. These students would benefit from a first-year orientation course that emphasized study skills and self-management.

Similarly, this study illustrated the limited nature of research on non-traditional student retention. Typically, non-traditional students are described as maintaining other commitments such as employment and family responsibilities, and are not expected to pursue a strong connection to campus. However, the students who were represented in Group 4 were not discussed in the student retention literature. This study uncovered a population of students who were non-traditional in age, but who exhibited behaviors, attitudes, and living situations more like traditional age students. Although they lived off-campus, they resided only a short distance from campus. While some indicated that they were trying to reconstruct previous traditional-age undergraduate experiences, many seemed to have rotated across several institutions, stopping out of college for semesters at a time, and hoping to finish their degrees as quickly as possible.

Although the findings are not conclusive, non-traditional students tended to reveal that they had limited or incorrect understandings of academic policies and procedures at UNCG. They also described being unable to balance work, family, and academic commitments. These students also commented that colleges needed to do more to bridge the gap between nontraditional and traditional students. They described feeling

disconnected to campus and unable to build relationships with a group of peers.

Subsequently, it may be helpful to create classes explicitly designed around the needs and concerns of these students. Such courses may help alleviate adult student anxiety about being conspicuously older than their peers. Due to the needs of this particular group of students, the courses could be offered online using Blackboard 6.0. Perhaps students from this group would be more likely to register for an online orientation course and would benefit from the information and resources provided.

The SAS 100 program in Student Advising

The advising techniques used in the SAS 100 program illustrate high-quality, development advising of an intrusive nature that utilizes current best practices in professional advising. However, in the SAS 100 model, these approaches are used only after students are clearly identified as at risk for failure and attrition. Ideally, this advising model could be used to proactively impact student persistence.

Faculty advisors are one of the most influential groups on any campus, given their contact with large numbers of students. As they are well informed in their own academic field, faculty advisors routinely conduct student advising well beyond the selection of courses and assist students in the development of academic goals. Additionally, larger institutions often have teams of professional advisors who perform supplemental advising and tend to focus on retention efforts. As the college-going population becomes more diverse, increasing the number of well-trained professional and faculty advisors will be critical to first-year college students. By sharing the successful advising practices employed in the SAS 100 model with faculty advisors, they would become familiar with

successful advising strategies and the use of the empowerment/motivation model, thereby meeting the needs of students from various backgrounds.

Based on the successful interventions evidenced in SAS 100, it is suggested that faculty and professional advisors conduct similar intrusive advising. In the SAS 100 model, advisors dialog with students about their life and career goals and encourage them to take steps toward fulfilling those goals, help students develop decision-making skills, provide students with information about departments on campus, and make appropriate referrals. These practices were revealed in student interviews and journal entries as beneficial to students in improving their academic preparedness, dedication, and interdependence. In addition, as advisors, SAS 100 instructors also received valuable feedback from students for program improvement.

The practice of the empowerment/motivation model components, especially the use of Appreciative Inquiry and Reality Therapy interview strategies, would help advisors better understand each individual advisee. It was noted in this study that the Appreciative Inquiry interview helped the SAS instructors focus on students' academic strengths and previous successful learning experiences, which provided both the instructors and the students with a positive starting point in academic improvement. Thus the students' confidence and dedication were successfully retained and their self-knowledge enhanced. The Reality Therapy strategy could then be employed by the advisor in facilitating students' efforts to maximize their strengths to help them achieve their goals. Faculty advisors could also use both Appreciative Inquiry and Reality Therapy interview strategies in facilitating student academic planning.

Finally, faculty advisors across campus need to be aware of the various backgrounds and diverse needs of first-year college students as this study revealed that the four groups of students were identified as having different backgrounds and needs. The reasons for the students' poor academic achievement leading to probation also varied accordingly. Such diversity needs to be brought to the faculty advisors' attention enabling them to take student backgrounds into consideration in their daily academic advising.

Appreciative Advising

Appreciative Inquiry and its role in the SAS 100 model was discussed, and its usefulness has been illustrated.

The use of the Appreciative model in academic advising leads to several outcomes. When students question a long held assumption and realize that it may not be true, they understand that they have power over their own future. Other assumptions begin to be challenged, and images of the future emerge that previously seemed impossible. Additionally, selective institutions have identified enrolled students as being capable of success and completing their degree, and under this assumption have invested resources in these students' efforts. This alone suggests that starting from a deficit-based paradigm, (i.e., looking for areas of academic weakness or poor time management) may not be an adequate starting point, since students should already have adequate preparation in these areas prior to matriculating. Further, students in academic trouble typically have a very limited time in which to correct their status. Practically, it is quicker to correct this status by building on strengths, maintaining an appropriate course load, and engaging in

academic and social behaviors that reflect these strengths, than it is to attempt to correct long-standing deficits.

In addition to the specific academic recovery concerns related to being on academic probation, this approach may be particularly useful in cases where students are considering internal transfer, where students have realized that their current declared major may not be a good fit, but are struggling to identify a new major.

One consequence of this study is the refinement of a more specific “Appreciative Advising” approach. Appreciative Advising involves asking questions that identify and strengthen a student’s capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through constructing “unconditional positive questions” that focus on what works as it influences the way in which people perceive themselves. The approach involves 4 phases:

Phase 1: involves asking students about their strengths and passions. The key to this phase is listening carefully to responses and asking only positive, affirmative questions.

Phase 2: based on the answers students provide, the adviser and the students work to build upon their articulated strengths, aspirations, and interests. Together they begin to articulate and formulate a plan for the students’ lives and careers.

Phase 3: the adviser works with students to devise strategies to accomplish short- and longer-term goals and to discuss the skills they need to develop.

Phase 4: the adviser allows the students room to accomplish these goals. But the adviser is there as a safety net to provide guidance and moral support to the students.

In the Appendices, two examples of the application of the Appreciative Advising model are provided. Appendix F is an example of an “Intake Model”, in which a student has entered the institution with some notion as to how they hope to proceed academically. Appendix G illustrates more concretely the “Recovery Model” that is used in the SAS 100 program. As the Recovery example illustrates, the approach may be used independently of a course such as SAS 100.

Assessment

For an intervention to be effective it must be powerful enough to affect change. The SAS 100 program requires an intense engagement from students for half a semester. However, early identification of potential problems, and subsequent intensive intervention, may make a difference in whether a student will leave the institution prematurely. Using student data collected through appropriate instruments, such as the one developed in this study, a profile of unsuccessful students can be developed. As students apply and are accepted, profile data can be used to identify “at risk” students and intervention strategies could be developed and implemented prior to actual enrollment and at appropriate points throughout each student’s college career. This early and intensive intervention can then be measured to see whether it has made an impact on student achievement and persistence.

Angelo and Cross (1993) call assessment the zipper that connects teaching and learning. Ultimately, one of the best predictors of student persistence is success in student learning. The instrument is measuring a latent trait, the theta that is based primarily on

self-perception. A more effective approach would be to examine increases in student learning across the curriculum before they experience academic trouble.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in the design of the present study that impact its internal validity and generalizability. Enrollment in the SAS 100 class itself may not be the only cause for student academic improvement. Participants' participation in tutoring or supplemental instruction, adjustment of academic or work schedules, and other activities could be confounding variables in measuring participants' awareness and understanding. Further, the reliability of participants' self-reported comments and their survey responses might be impacted by the researcher's role as an instructor. Moreover, participants' change in attitude and development in their academic profile were only measured based on the survey instruments, document data, and interview transcripts. No classroom observation or follow-up longitudinal study was conducted due to time limitations. Although the researcher used various ways to minimize his potential bias or subjectivity, including member checking, and theoretical and data triangulation, there may still be oversimplification or exaggeration of the case situation in the reports that led to erroneous conclusions about the reality of the participants' learning. Finally, with the study of 23 participants, it is difficult to generalize the findings of the study to any other institutions. More empirical studies on the effectiveness of the SAS 100 intervention are necessary.

In order to better understand the factors that impact college students' academic performance and to qualitatively measure over time the impact of the SAS 100 program

on participants' development of strategies for academic success, face-to-face interviews were used in this study. However, among the 279 survey respondents, only 23 volunteered to be interviewed. This small number of interviewees limited the external validity and generalizability of the qualitative findings. In a future replication of this study, the researcher plans to contact SAS 100 instructors for permission to use class time for interviews, which would lead to the possibility of acquiring a more complete set of qualitative data to better describe the characteristics of the four groups of probation students that were identified in the present study. Although the number of participants who volunteered to be interviewed was small relative to the number of probation students, it was observed that there was no attrition of the interviewees in this study. All the 23 students who volunteered at the beginning of the semester completed both interviews.

Additionally, the researcher was involved in creating and implementing the SAS 100 program, and he served as an instructor in one section of the course in the semester in which this study was conducted. In order to avoid bias in measuring program impact, the researcher did not interview participants who were enrolled in his class or with whom he worked as an advisor.

Future Research

This study demonstrated the impact of the SAS 100 program on the spring 2005 cohort of participants. The findings of the study indicated the positive short-term impact of the SAS 100 model on participant's self-perception of social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence. It would be

interesting to apply the SAS 100 model to students in other student environments, such as first-year orientation classes involving students who have not yet experienced academic trouble, to examine the long-term impact of the model on participants, and to modify the measures used in this study based on this additional empirical data.

The findings from this study suggest that the SAS 100 model impacted the latent traits of social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence. While this impact was important because of the academic recovery needs of these participants, it suggests that the same model may be used with various groups of students, regardless of academic standing, to improve their persistence and academic achievement. Implementing the model with a more diverse group of students and employing the same measures would be of value in improving our knowledge of college student success.

Because of the time restrictions for this study, no data were collected to measure the long-term impact of the SAS 100 program. It would be interesting to follow up with the study participants and to examine the long-term impact of the SAS 100 program on their behaviors and performance.

In the present study, the Student Strategies for Success instrument was used to measure participants' development of social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence. More empirical data could be collected from the participants to further examine the reliability and validity of the instrument. For example, comparison of the responses of students on academic probation

with students who are academically successful would be useful in further refining the instrument.

Summary

Based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected in the study, the characteristics of the students on probation, the reasons that students provided to explain going on academic probation, and the impact of the SAS 100 program on participants' development in their strategies for academic success were explored and discussed. In the comparisons of the pre- and post-survey responses, it was evident that the SAS 100 program had a positive impact on students' development of social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence.

Moreover, it was illustrated in this study that the SAS 100 model is an effective approach in helping college students on academic probation recover their academic standing. Individual case analyses and group comparisons further described the growth in participants' growth in the six attributes that were identified as central to the academic recovery process.

The quantitative findings based on the pre- and post-responses on the survey instrument demonstrated participants' improvement in their perception of their well-preparedness for the academic environment and their enhanced self-awareness as students. It was also noted in the study that the participants' own previous experiences as students greatly impacted, and sometimes confounded, their understanding of their academic performance.

Based on the findings from this study, the researcher suggested further modifications to the SAS 100 program for diverse higher education settings, examining the long-term impact of the SAS 100 program on students on probation, and modifying the empowerment/motivation model for academic advisors to use in their daily advising to provide academic support for college students.

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Appendix A. Consent Form

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Exploring the Reasons for Academic Probation

Project Director: Bryant Hutson

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Date of Consent: _____

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Student Academic Success (SAS) Program on students' attitude and provide feedback to improve the program to better address students' needs. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete the Student Academic Success survey (28 items) at the beginning and the end of the course. You may also be invited to join a focus group discussion at the end of the course to provide more feedback on the SAS program.

There will be no risk associated with this research. The principal researcher will be the only one that has access to the data collected. All information regarding the true identity of the research participants will be kept in a locked file at the researcher's house. All written data collected will be kept for three years after which time they shall be shredded and disposed. Any related electronic data files will be deleted after five years.

Bryant Hutson, or a representative from Student Academic Services, has explained the procedures involved in this research project including the purpose and what will be required of you. Any benefits and risks were also described. They have answered all of your current questions regarding your participation in this project. You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time without penalty or prejudice; your participation is entirely voluntary. Your privacy will be protected because you will not be identified by name as a participant in this project.

The research and this consent form have been approved by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling Eric Allen at (336) 334-5878. Questions regarding the research itself will be answered by Bryant Hutson by calling 336-292-5793. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

By signing this form, you are agreeing to participate in the project described to you by Bryant Hutson, or a representative from Student Academic Services.

Participant's Signature

Appendix B. Course Syllabus

SAS 100: Strategies for Academic Success
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Course Outline
Spring 2005

Instructor: <u>Bryant Hutson</u>	Meeting Time: 8:00-9:15
Course Location: Foust 111	E-mail: blhutson@uncg.edu

As your instructor, my goal is to offer you one of the most valuable learning experiences of your entire life, but I need your FULL cooperation to make it work!

Course Description: This course is designed to help you achieve greater success in college and in life. In the next eight weeks you will learn many proven strategies for achieving greater academic, professional, and personal success.

Course Objectives: In this course, you will learn how to...

- ◆ Achieve a greater sense of personal responsibility
- ◆ Increase self-motivation
- ◆ Master effective self-management strategies
- ◆ Develop mutually supportive relationships
- ◆ Revise self-defeating patterns
- ◆ Maximize your learning
- ◆ Manage your emotional life
- ◆ Raise your self-esteem
- ◆ Improve creative and critical thinking skills
- ◆ Master effective study skills

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory to pass this course and to remain enrolled at UNCG. **Missing one class will lead to academic suspension.** You must contact Jennifer Austin in Student Academic Services by phone or e-mail IMMEDIATELY if you wish to appeal your suspension. To appeal an academic suspension, you must submit a written appeal to Jennifer Austin.

Tardy Policy:

If you are more than 15 minutes late for class, you will be counted as absent. Since no absences are allowed in this course, you will be **immediately suspended if you are tardy more than 15 minutes.** This policy is implemented because regular attendance and being prompt for class are important for your academic success. You can appeal your suspension to Jennifer Austin in Student Academic Services. She can be reached at 159 Mossman Building, 334-3867, JDAUSTIN@uncg.edu

Course Method:

In this class we discuss empowering strategies that have helped others achieve greater success. By completing guided journal entries, you will discover how to apply these success strategies to achieve your own goals and dreams. By participating in class activities and focused conversations, you will further improve your ability to stay on a successful course.

Assignments:

Journals: Journals will be assigned on a weekly basis. Each of the seven journal assignments is worth seven points. **Journals should be turned in via e-mail or Blackboard's digital dropbox at least 24 hours before class.** No late journal entries will be accepted. These journal entries are a way for you to explore your thoughts and feelings as they apply to the material covered. The journal entries should have **important meaning to YOU, and should be written for yourself** with personal growth in mind. You will receive the full ten points for each journal entry as long as:

- ◆ The entry is complete (all steps in the directions have been responded to), and
- ◆ The entry is written with high standards.

Discussion Board/Class Participation: You will participate regularly in discussions and activities in the classroom and in online discussions through Blackboard. The online discussions should include your reactions to and questions about the classroom discussions and activities, and should include responses to other students' remarks in the online discussion. **You are expected to contribute at least two posts to each online discussion.**

*Instructor Conference: Each student is required to meet with me outside of class **TWICE before Tuesday, March 8th.** One conference will be required in the first four weeks, and a second during the final three weeks of class. The conference enables me to get to know*

*you better, as well as to discuss your progress and strategies for success. Please make an appointment ahead of time by e-mail or after class. The conference will take 15-30 minutes. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call or e-mail before the meeting. **If you miss the conference and you don't contact me before hand, you will receive 0 points for the instructor conference.***

Strategies for Success Letter: In the final assignment, you will be asked to write an anonymous letter to an SAS 100 student next semester. This letter will be given to an SAS 100 student at the start of the course next semester in a sealed envelope. You should address the letter to the SAS 100 student (i.e., Dear SAS 100 student). The letter should be 1 ½-2 pages in length. **The letter is due on or before the end of class on Tuesday, March 8th, 2005.** No late assignments will be accepted. **You must complete this assignment, or you will be ineligible to pass this course.**

The letter should include:

- ◆ What you have learned this semester
- ◆ Your advise for a student who has recently been placed on probation
- ◆ Your perceptions of the course and what they can expect in the course
- ◆ Your effort to “Dive deep”

Grading:

This course is a pass/fail course.

- ◆ You must earn 70 of the possible 100 points to pass this course
- ◆ If you earn **more than 90 points, you will receive a “high pass”** for this course.
- ◆ A point system is in place so that you may accurately gauge your performance.

Appendix C. Student Strategies for Success Survey

Student Strategies for Success Survey

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age: _____
(Please fill in)

3. Are you a transfer student?

- Yes
- No

4. Ethnic Group

- White American
- African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Multiracial
- Other (please list) _____

5. Classification:

- Freshman (0-29 hours)
- Sophomore (30-59 hours)
- Junior (60-89 hours)
- Senior (90 hours and above)

6. Did you transfer from a community college?

- Yes
- No

7. What was the average number of hours per week you worked during last semester?

	None	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26+
	<input type="checkbox"/>						

8. How many hours per week did you spend studying last semester?

	<input type="checkbox"/>						
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9. Where do you live?

- Campus residence hall
- Private home
- Private apartment
- Campus apartment
- Greek housing
- Other (please list) _____

10. If you commute to and from campus, how long does it take to make the round trip?

- Do not commute
- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- More than 5 hours

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. My college education will enable me to attain my career and life goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. I feel that I am part of a social network on campus.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
13. I have decided on a major.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14. I feel comfortable contacting my professors outside of class.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15. I always feel prepared for class.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16. I feel there is at least one university employee who cares about my welfare (i.e., instructor, advisor, staff member).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17. I know what occupation I want to pursue.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
18. I am committed to completing my degree.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
19. I am involved in activities on campus.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
20. I know how to concentrate in class.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
21. I know my academic strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
22. I know what resources are available to me as a student.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
23. I feel the climate at my college allows me to freely express my opinions and views.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
24. I ask for help from others when needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
25. I balance school and other responsibilities effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
26. I have a clear picture of my long-term goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
27. I know how to study for different types of tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
28. I am confident in my ability to succeed.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Appendix D. Interview Protocol

Interview protocol for SAS 100 study participants

In the typical face-to-face session for a SAS 100 student, the discussion takes place within the framework of Appreciative Inquiry and Reality Therapy. In this interview protocol, the sessions are designed for the students to provide feedback about their experiences in SAS 100, and are not designed to provide support as the face-to-face SAS 100 sessions would. The questions begin with broader questions about the student's experiences at UNCG and gradually focus on their SAS 100 experience. This approach is used to gain some understanding about the student's past experience and current situation before focusing on their experience as an SAS 100 student.

1. Academic experience at UNCG
 - What do you think of your academic experience at UNCG?
 - a. What have been your greatest academic successes at UNCG?
 - b. What have been your biggest challenges to remaining enrolled at UNCG?

2. Support system for students at UNCG
 - How do you feel about academic advising at UNCG?
 - a. What has most helped you to continue your studies at this university?
 - b. What would you change at this university to help future students?
 - c. Who has helped you the most at UNCG?
 - d. What do you most like about being a student at this university?
 - e. What do you least like about being a student at this university?

3. SAS 100 course at UNCG
 - What do you think of the SAS 100 course at UNCG?
 - a. What has the SAS 100 program been like for you?
 - b. How has the SAS 100 class helped you?
 - c. What advice would you give to students just beginning their college education at this university?

Appendix E. Interviewee List

#	Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Classification	Comments	Group #
1	Angie	20	Female	African American	Sophomore		1
2	Benji	20	Female	White	Junior	Transfer, disabled	1
3	Frank	40	Male	White	Senior	Transfer	4
4	Hope	25	Female	African American	Freshman	Works full-time	3
5	Janet		Female	White	Freshman		2
6	Jim	19	Male	White	Freshman		1
7	Joe	21	Male	White	Junior		2
8	Josh	27	Male	Latino	Junior	CC Transfer	3
9	Joy	23	Female	White	Sophomore		2
10	Mark	20	Male	African American	Freshman		1
11	Mike	21	Male	Asian American	Freshman		2
12	Oprah	20	Female	African American, Native American	Sophomore		1
13	Mo	21	Female	White	Sophomore		2
14	Shane	20	Male	White	Freshman		2
15	Steve	25	Male	White	Junior		3
16	Theresa	28	Female	White	Maybe senior		3
17	Vanessa	21	Female	White	Junior		1
18	Ellie	60	Female	African-American	Junior	Transfer	4
19	Chris	20	Male	White	Freshman		1
20	Jane	20	Female	White	Freshman		2
21	Kris	39	Female	African American	Senior		4
22	Sammy	20	Female	African American	Junior	Transfer, disability	1
23	Ben	47	Female	African American	Sophomore		4

Full-time traditional, on-campus=1

Full-time traditional, off-campus=2

Full-time, near-campus, non-traditional=3

Part-time, off-campus, non-traditional=4

Appendix F. Appreciative Advising-Intake Model

Stages of Appreciative Advising	Application	Implications
Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking students for a narrative that illustrates a personal triumph • listening carefully to student needs • asking students about their strengths and passions; • listening carefully to responses • asking only positive, affirmative questions • identifying a profile of academic strengths to use as the basis of planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student enters UNCG with a declared Business Administration major. • She meets with her advisor, and describes how she become interested in business administration through becoming involved in FBLA and through an after-school job. • The student tells her advisor about classes in which she excelled in high school.
Dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with students to build upon their articulated strengths, aspirations, and interests • formulating with students a plan for their lives and careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student and advisor devise a course schedule reflecting their interest in Business Administration and the coursework in which they have had previous success. • The student and advisor discuss how the coursework may be made more congruent with career plans.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with students to devise strategies to accomplish short- and longer-term goals • discussing the skills they need to develop • identifying and developing support networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advisor maintains contact with the student at intervals to see how she feels about her academic status and career plans. • The student devises a set of short-term and long-term academic goals with her advisor; this includes developing a timeline that includes learning more about career options and internships that correspond with her interests. • She works with her advisor to identify contact people and academic resources that will help her reach these goals. • The student commits to make follow-up meetings with his advisor in the future.
Delivery/Destiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing students room to accomplish these goals • contacting students at intervals to provide guidance and moral support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advisor continues to make contact with the student at intervals to see how he feels about her academic status and career plans. • Student meets with the advisor to reflect on what has been accomplished over the semester, what behaviors needs to be adjusted, and whether her current goals are still realistic.

Appendix G. Appreciative Advising-Recovery Model

Stages of Appreciative Advising	Application	Implications
Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking students for a narrative that illustrates a personal triumph • listening carefully to student needs • asking students about their strengths and passions • listening carefully to responses • asking only positive, affirmative questions • identifying a profile of academic strengths to use as the basis of recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student enters UNCG as a Pre-Nursing major. • His GPA does not make him competitive as a Nursing school applicant. • He meets with his advisor, and tells stories of family members working in the healthcare field, and how he loved his job as a CNA the previous summer. • His interest in nursing was reinforced when he discovered he could work easily with people who were distressed; he believes he can make a difference in society by working to improve individual's quality of life.
Dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with students to build upon their articulated strengths, aspirations, and interests • formulating with students a plan for their lives and careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student discusses with his advisor the types of careers that would correspond with this positive career and academic experiences, interests, and talents; he feels public health may be an alterative career. • The student discusses with his advisor how he can develop an academic plan to achieve this goal. • The student discusses how his academic plans would promote a career path.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with students to devise strategies to accomplish short- and longer-term goals • discussing the skills they need to develop • identifying and developing support networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has reservations about abandoning the nursing major; however, he commits to learn more about Public Health by meeting with career councilors and faculty in that department. • He devises a set of short-term and long-term academic goals with his advisor; this includes developing a timeline that includes making a decision about the major change. • He works with his advisor to identify contact people and academic resources that will help him reach these goals. • The student commits to make a follow-up meeting with his advisor in the future.
Delivery/Destiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing students room to accomplish these goals • contacting students at intervals to provide guidance and moral support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advisor makes contact with the student at intervals to see how he feels about his academic status and career plans. • Student meets with the advisor to reflect on what has been accomplished over the semester, what behaviors needs to be adjusted, and whether his current goals are still realistic.