

2009

# A reality check : the expectations high school seniors have about their first year of college

Brian R. Harke

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Harke, Brian R., "A reality check : the expectations high school seniors have about their first year of college" (2009). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 212.

<https://repository.usfca.edu/diss/212>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact [repository@usfca.edu](mailto:repository@usfca.edu).

The University of San Francisco

A REALITY CHECK: THE EXPECTATIONS HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS HAVE  
ABOUT THEIR FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
Department of Leadership Studies  
Organization & Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Brian Harke  
San Francisco  
December 2009

The University of San Francisco

Dissertation Abstract

A REALITY CHECK: THE EXPECTATIONS HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS HAVE  
ABOUT THEIR FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

Freshman persistence levels continue to drop as incoming freshmen are experiencing higher levels of stress and distress. There is an opportunity to address these issues by helping high school seniors set realistic expectations about college.

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the academic, personal, and social expectations that high school seniors have about college. The study also examined the correlation of these expectations by gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA.

The methodology of this study was an online survey. The survey yielded an initial return of 126 respondents; however only 112 submitted completed surveys.

This study found that high school seniors expect that college will be a repeat of high school, faculty will get to know them personally, and that they will not have trouble doing well in class. A pattern of unrealistic levels of self-confidence to succeed was also evident. There was no difference in the expectations of participants as a result of their gender, ethnicity, geographic region, or GPA.

These findings support the need to start college transition programs while students are still in high school. By helping high school students set realistic expectations about college new college students could experience greater success.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

<u>Brian Harke</u> Candidate	<u>11/04/09</u> Date
---------------------------------	-------------------------

Dissertation Committee

<u>Dr. Patricia Mitchell</u> Chairperson	<u>11/04/09</u>
---	-----------------

<u>Dr. Betty Taylor</u>	<u>11/04/09</u>
-------------------------	-----------------

<u>Dr. Brian Gerrard</u>	<u>11/04/09</u>
--------------------------	-----------------

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mom, Bobette Harke.

*Mom, I thought of you while I was writing this. I wish you were here to read it and see me earn my degree. You are forever in my heart.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Matthew for being the best spouse anyone could ask for. You were my support and guide through this process. You listened when I complained and helped me celebrate my successes. You are my best friend. I love you.

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee members Dr. Patricia Mitchell, Dr. Betty Taylor, and Dr. Brian Gerrard. Dr. Mitchell was not only my dissertation chair, but also my mentor, sage, and friend. She was the reason I was able to keep on going when the wind was blowing in my face. Dr. Taylor and Dr. Gerrard looked out for my best interest and did not give up on me when we hit turbulence. I thank each of you for generously giving me so much of your personal time and for making a personal commitment to help me succeed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER I THE RESEARCH PROBLEM .....	1
Statement of Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Background and Need For the Study .....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Research Questions.....	9
Limitations of the Study.....	9
Significance of Study.....	11
Definition of Terms.....	12
Summary .....	13
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	16
Introduction.....	16
History of College Transition Programs .....	16
Current Trends in High School to College Transition .....	18
New College Student: Millennials .....	21
How Millennials Communicate.....	22
How to Empower Millennials to Learn .....	27
Prestablished Characteristics and Challenges of Millennials .....	28
Desired Skills, Insight, Thinking, and Behaviors for New College Students .....	33
Realistic Academic Expectations .....	34
Educational and Personal Goals .....	35
Social Adjustment Skills .....	36
Personal and Emotional Development Skills .....	38
Summary .....	43
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY .....	45
Restatement of the Research Problem .....	45
Research Design.....	45
Research Setting.....	46
Population .....	47
Sample.....	47
Instrumentation .....	49
Reliability.....	50
Validity .....	51

Data Collection .....	52
Data Analysis .....	53
Summary .....	56
<b>CHAPTER IV FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Introduction .....	57
Research Question Findings .....	57
Research Question #1 .....	57
Research Question #2 .....	61
Research Question #3 .....	64
Research Question #4 .....	68
Summary of Findings.....	71
<b>CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND</b>	
<b>RECOMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>74</b>
Summary of the Study .....	74
Discussion .....	75
Research Question 1 .....	75
Research Question 2 .....	77
Research Question 3 .....	78
Research Question 4 .....	79
Conclusions.....	81
Implications.....	81
Recommendations for Professional Practice .....	84
Recommendations for Future Research .....	85
Concluding Thought .....	86
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>APPENDIXES .....</b>	<b>95</b>
Appendix A: Hard Copy Survey.....	96
Appendix B: Reliability Email.....	97
Appendix C: Participation Request E-mail Sent.....	100
Appendix D: Participation Request Reminder Email .....	102
Appendix E: IRBPHS Approval For Human Subject Use In Research.....	103



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Ethnicity of Sample .....48

Table 2 Regions and Associated States .....49

Table 3 Assignment of Question Order to Each Category .....54

Table 4 Weighting For Answers to Survey Questions.....54

Table 5 Academic Expectations.....58

Table 6 Personal Expectations .....62

Table 7 Social Expectations.....65

Table 8 Relationship Between Gender, Academic Expectations, Personal  
Expectations, and Social Expectations .....69

Table 9 Relationship Between Ethnicity and ACA, PER, SOC Expectations.....70

Table 10 Relationship Between Region and Academic Expectations, Personal  
Expectations, and Social Expectations .....71

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Tinto's model of student persistence.....	7
---	---

## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Statement of Problem

The majority of students who approach the transition from high school to college do so with feelings of joy, confidence, and anticipation (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 2000). However, once they arrive at college their prior expectations are often replaced by feelings that are incongruent with earlier ideas. The reality of college life is harsher and more stressful than anticipated (Compas, Wagner, Slavin, & Vannatta, 1986). The ideas and perceptions about college held by potential students are often more romanticized notions than accurate reflections of college life. This leaves many new students struggling to adjust to their new environment (Keup, 2007). As a result, 34% will drop out in the first year (American College Testing Program, 2008). Dingfelder (2004) reported that close to 15% of those who drop out do so because of failing grades. Most of these will leave within the first 6 weeks of the fall term (Blanc, Behur, & Martin, 1983).

One of the difficulties in adjusting to college is the incongruence between students' preestablished cognitive and behavioral expectations before starting college and their actual experience after they have begun their college careers. This also includes perceived expectations held by the new college student about what a college student is and what a college environment entails. Internal and external forces from real and perceived authority figures create these preestablished characteristics through experience, inexperience, observation, and influence (Tinto, 1975).

Stern (1966) used the term “freshman myth” to describe the overconfident and unrealistic naiveté, enthusiasm, and boundless idealism of preestablished expectations held by new college students. Stern proposed that preestablished characteristics are often mythical because students’ expectations are rarely realized; their experiences in the first weeks and months of university life are usually much more stressful and challenging than they had anticipated.

Upcraft and Gardner (1989) supported Stern’s concepts and stated, “Many students enter college with only vague notions of what undergraduate education is all about” (p. 68). Incongruence occurs when they receive feedback from others or when the campus culture is not consistent with their expectations. This incongruence leaves them searching for ways to adapt to new social norms, form relationships, and find new support systems or someone they perceive cares about them (Isheler, 2004).

Many colleges have adopted new college-student transition techniques to address issues relating to preestablished expectations. Some of these include: (a) summer visits, (b) freshman seminars, (c) cohort groups, and (d) residential learning communities. However, the general population continues to enter college unprepared for the emotional, social, and academic challenges they will encounter (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997). Carter (2009) argued that there is not enough academic, emotional, or social preparation from middle school and high school to do college-level work. As a result, freshman persistence-levels continue to drop and recent trends suggest incoming freshmen are experiencing higher levels of stress and distress than their predecessors (Boulter, 2002).

The decrease in new-student persistence levels and increased levels of stress

dictate the need for change in how transition programs are supporting new-student success. An effort to bring about cognitive and behavioral changes of new college students prior to their arrival on campus has been neglected (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997). There is an opportunity to address expectations of high school seniors about college while they are still surrounded by a familiar support system and social structure. To do this, more information is needed about the expectations high school seniors have about college.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the academic, personal, and social expectations that high school seniors have about college. The study looked at these expectations through the descriptive lens of the entire sample population. The study further examined the correlation of these expectations with the sample population's gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and grade-point average (GPA).

The academic expectations examined included the high school seniors' motivation to learn, their educational goals, their level of confidence, and their role, as well as the faculty's role. The personal expectations examined included individual disposition and attitudes about going to college. The social expectations examined included high school seniors' attitude about managing independence, social pressures, and cultural differences.

### Background and Need For the Study

Of the estimated 18 million students enrolled in college in 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), nearly 34% will have dropped out in the first year because they were underprepared and lacked realistic expectations about college (American College Testing

Program, 2008). The majority of new college students leave college during the first 6 weeks of the fall term because they have not been able to make a successful transition (Blanc et al., 1983).

Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot (2005) proposed that if institutions are to challenge and support first-year students in their academic success, they must focus on both the characteristics and expectations of their students prior to college. It is important that institutions implement high school-to-college transition programs that address expectations prior to new students arriving on campus. Krallman and Holcomb (1997) reported that understanding the emotional, social, and academic expectations of new college students plays a vital role in new-student success. In some cases, these expectations are unrealistic and can result in new college students facing personal, social, or academic failure. This could result in the students experiencing cognitive dissonance, additional stress, and possible withdrawal from the institution.

The expectations of new students about college are discussed in many scholarly articles, but there is little evidence of programs or initiatives being instituted to help incoming freshman set realistic expectations about college. There is an effort to help high-risk student groups, but the general incoming-freshman population continues to be put through a recycled, uniform crash-course transition program that mirrors many of the transition programs started more than 100 years ago (Upcraft et al., 2005). Such programs take place once the new college student arrives on campus.

There have been many studies devoted to understanding the preestablished expectations of new college students. Hawley and Harris (2005) analyzed the characteristics of students that impact persistence among first-year students. They

reported that students who enter college lacking self-motivation and academic goals are less likely to persist than students who have an academic plan and understand how to achieve their goals.

Krallman and Holcomb (1997) conducted research to identify the beliefs of college freshmen. Their research showed that new college students entered college with many unrealistic expectations that could lead to disillusionment and failure. After attending a transition program and spending time on campus, some of the students reported that their unrealistic expectations were changed to a more realistic view. Krallman and Holcomb concluded that early intervention and new-student orientations can serve as important tools to adjust preestablished expectations and set realistic views of the college experience.

Keup (2007) studied how precollege student expectations and their fulfillment during the freshman year can affect students' adjustment during the first year of college. Results showed that students enter college with very specific expectations about academic activities, nonacademic activities, interpersonal relationships, and personal development. These expectations influenced academic performance, satisfaction with college, and sense of personal identity.

Furthermore, Keup (2007) reported that college-level academics required much more self-discipline, initiative, and personal responsibility than did participants' classes in high school. Adjusting to the academic rigors of college proved more difficult for them than they had anticipated. They were not prepared to deal with the time management and self-management issues they would encounter. Specifically, choosing classes, creating and maintaining a study schedule, motivating themselves to attend class, and successfully

completing the assignments for classes were some of the areas in which the new college students had unrealistic expectations.

Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, and Alisat (2000) conducted a longitudinal study that examined the complexity of expectations that new college students hold and how they affect adjustment of new college students. Results indicated that students with more realistic expectations about college tended to adjust better to stressful circumstances associated with being a new college student than did students who had simpler unrealistic expectations.

Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) presented a study of undergraduates, their expectations of college, and how those expectations related to better grades and persistence. Findings suggested that many new college students tended to overestimate their ability to adjust academically and socially to college. As a result, a pattern of disillusionment occurred and students were less likely to persist with their academic plans.

Studies such as these have provided valuable information about new-college-student expectations and the effect those expectations have on student success. However, they all have the same research limitation. The studies sought to identify new college students' expectations only after the students spent time in the college environment. Time spent in the college environment could bias the validity of the reported preuniversity expectations. As a result, there is a lack of data on the emotional, social, and academic expectations students have about college before they spend time in their new college environment, expectations that they hold while they are still seniors in high school.



## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of individual-student departure. This theory provides the foundation for many college-retention programs. Tinto's model of individual student departure is among the most widely discussed in the higher education literature (Milem, 1997).

Tinto (1975) proposed a theoretical model of persistence that included the following components: (a) preentry attributes (prior schooling, skills, beliefs, and family background); (b) goals/commitment (student aspirations and institutional goals); (c) institutional experiences (academics, faculty interaction, cocurricular involvement, and peer group interaction); (d) integration (academic and social); (e) goals/commitment (intentions and external commitments); and (f) outcome (departure decision—graduate, transfer, dropout). Tinto suggested that these components comprise both a formal and an informal system that interplay with each other. When the balance in the systems is in balance, the student is most likely to persist. This model is illustrated in Figure 1.

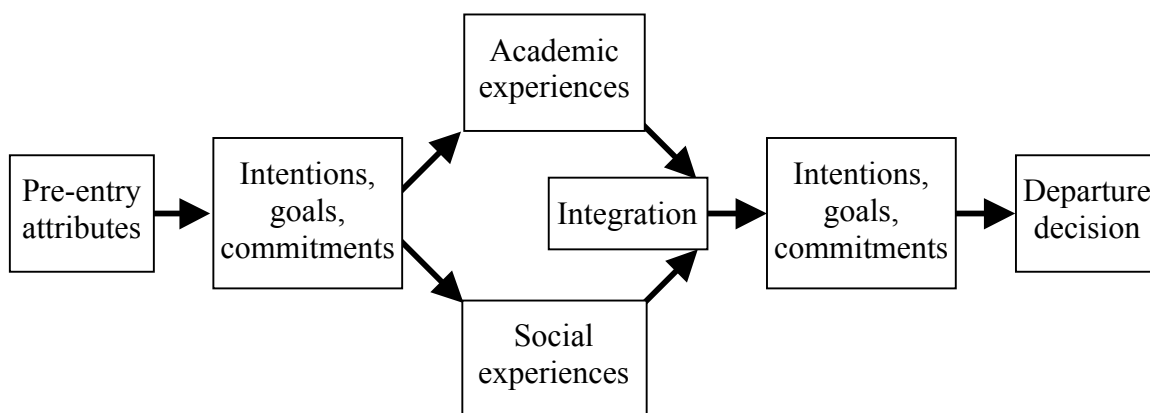


Figure 1. Tinto's model of student persistence.

Tinto (1975) theorized that students enter college with particular preentry attributes that affect their initial adjustment and success. Some of these include overconfidence and unrealistic expectations about their ability to deal with the emotional, social, and academic challenges they may face. Both overconfidence and unrealistic expectations affect initial adjustment and success. If these areas are addressed before students' initial experience at college, they may be more successful at integrating into the new environment (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Tinto (1975) theorized that the more students are academically and socially aware, the more likely they are to persist and graduate. Their commitment to college is dependent on the quality and quantity of the academic and social experience. If the initial experience is helpful and rewarding, the student is more likely to become integrated into the new environment.

The academic and social integration variables form the foundation for Tinto's persistence model, however he also believed that the receiving environment played an important role in student persistence. Therefore, Tinto (1975) adapted Van Gennep's (1960) rites-of-passage theory, and incorporated it his persistence model. Tinto suggested that the more students are prepared for the receiving environment, the more likely they will persist.

To Van Gennep (1960), the use of ritual and ceremony are necessary components of a student's transition into a new environment. Van Gennep suggested that as people transition from one stage in life to another, rites of passages occur and society recognizes these through celebration or a marked event. These events provide concrete evidence of the next stage of evolution into a new environment. The events also serve to recognize

the accomplishment and advancement though they did not necessarily prepare students to deal with the new environment.

Tinto (1993) stated that the success of new-student transition depends in part on the degree to which individuals have already begun the process of separation and transition prior to “formal entry.” Tinto theorized that a “rite of passage” into the higher education arena needs to start prior to the actual experience. By participating in such an experience, the student can learn to navigate through the higher education system and acclimate to the new environmental setting more quickly. Setting realistic expectations is a major component of this process.

#### Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the academic expectations that high school seniors have about college?
2. What are the personal expectations that high school seniors have about college?
3. What are the social expectations that high school seniors have about college?
4. How do gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA affect the expectations that high school seniors have about college?

#### Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. The information provided by high school seniors is based on their interpretation of the survey questions. The high school seniors' knowledge base and experience of higher education may affect how they respond to a question in comparison to someone with a different background. Also, there was no one

available to clarify a question if a student was unclear on the meaning of the question content. This could lead the student to make an inaccurate response.

The information gathered is empirical and void of any qualitative discussion about the questions or interpretation of the answers. The researcher did not follow up with any of the participants to interview them in person. Doing so might have altered the results. Through discussion, further facts about why students answered as they did could have been revealed. Discussion also may have highlighted confusion about questions by the participants and might have altered the results.

The sample is specific in that it relates to high school seniors who have expressed interest in a top-tier, private, 4-year, residential university. This study did not include a sample of high school seniors who attended 2-year colleges, public, or commuter colleges and universities. The university is known for its high admission standards. This made the sample very homogeneous in that the students who expressed interest in the university would be more likely to be high achievers both academically and personally. Generalizability of the information to other subsets of new college students should be approached with caution.

Furthermore, the online survey used has limitations. Although the survey was developed over a 7-year period, with more than 5,000 student-affairs specialists and college faculty assisting in the refinement of the instrument, the authors did not include proof of reliability. With this in mind, the researcher ran a Cronbach's alpha reliability test on the survey. The results indicated that the survey does not show strong reliability.

### Significance of Study

Research demonstrates that of the estimated 18 million students enrolled in college in 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), nearly 34% will withdraw in the first year (American College Testing Program, 2008). The majority of new college students leave college during the first 6 weeks of the fall term because they have not been able to make a successful transition. They are faced with a new environment that is incongruent with their preestablished expectations (Blanc et al., 1983).

Upcraft et al. (2005) proposed that if institutions are to challenge and support first-year students in their academic success, they must focus on both the characteristics and expectations of students prior to college. Understanding the emotional, social, and academic expectations of new college students plays a vital role in new-student success (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997).

This study provides insight into the expectations that a particular group of high school seniors have about college before they graduate from high school. The information gleaned from this study can provide support for new transition programs that address the characteristics and expectations new college students have about college. In turn, these new transition programs could help adjust preestablished expectations and eliminate much of the incongruence that would otherwise be experienced. This could lead to higher persistence rates and student success.

Without more information on the expectations high school seniors have about college, transition programs could continue the cycle of not meeting the needs of many new students. As a result, some students will enter college with unrealistic expectations. They will be unprepared for the emotional, social, and academic challenges they will

encounter (Boulter, 2002). The possibility of failure and student departure from the college environment is inevitable.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms have been operationalized for this study:

*Academic expectations.* The expectations held by a student about the difficulty of college courses, the nature of learning in college, the roles and responsibilities of college instructors, and the nature of instruction in college.

*Expectations.* Expectations of new college students are their perceived cognitive and behavioral beliefs and abilities as they relate to being a new college student (Tinto, 1975). This also includes perceived expectations held by the new college students about what a college student is and what a college environment entails. Expectations also include the perceived relationships and roles between students and faculty. Internal and external forces from real and perceived authority figures create these preestablished characteristics through experience, inexperience, observation, and influence.

*Incongruence.* Incongruence is the psychological discomfort felt as a result of a discrepancy between what one already knows or believes, and new information or interpretation that may contradict that knowledge or those beliefs (Atherton, 2005). Incongruence can lead to stress and distress if a person does not have a positive self-efficacy and or coping skills to deal with the incongruence.

*New college student/millennials.* New college students, or millennials, are defined as any student who graduated from high school in the Spring and is going to attend college in the Fall of the same year and who were born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

*Persistence.* Persistence will be used in lieu of retention. Persistence is proactive in nature in comparison to retention, which is reactive in nature. For this study, persistence will be defined as continuity of a continuous and connected period of time until degree completion.

*Personal expectations.* The expectations held by a student about their emotional reactions to college, and the degree to which they believe they are prepared to do college-level work. It further includes the students' level of self-efficacy and ability to manage their independence.

*Social expectations.* The expectations held by a student about social pressures in college, interactions between students and instructors, the nature and composition of college populations, and relationships between students and their family/friends.

#### Summary

The transition to college life can create inner turmoil for students as they leave existing sources of social support and familiarity behind (Urani, Miller, Johnson, & Petzel, 2003). Many new students enter college with expectations that lead to incongruence once they experience college life. Their expectations of college are consistently more positive than the subsequent experiences these same students report after attending the institution (Keup, 2007). This incongruence could lead to student distress, failure, and departure. Tinto (1993) theorized that the more students are academically and socially aware, the more likely they are to persist and graduate. Bean and Eaton (2001) proposed that this awareness will increase the self-efficacy of new college students. A strong sense of self-efficacy and realistic beliefs about capabilities to

produce designated levels of performance will help new college students embrace the changes they may encounter.

There is an opportunity to address preestablished expectations and prepare new students to cope with the emotional, social, and academic challenges they will face. To do this, new-student expectations need to be studied and incorporated into new-student transition programs.

There is a lack of research on the expectations that new students hold about college, conducted prior to them spending time in the college environment. This study identified the academic, personal, and social expectations a certain group of high school seniors had about college, prior to them spending time in the college environment. The expectations were correlated with the students' gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA to identify how these characteristics affected their expectations. The information gathered could provide support for colleges and high schools that wish to aid students in their transition to college life.

In chapter 2 of this study, a review of relevant literature concerning several aspects of new-college-student transition was described. In particular the researcher evaluated the history and evolution of new-student transitions. In the chapter, the researcher sought to define who the new college student is and demonstrated unique characteristics of this group of students. The chapter further explained the importance of recognizing students' preestablished expectations. Chapter 3 presents methodology of the research study conducted. A discussion of the research design, setting, and population is included. The description of the instrumentation, collection, and the



analysis of data conclude the chapter. The final chapters of the study present the findings and discussion of the research. They also present conclusions, implications, and recommendations for professional practices and further study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The literature reviewed in this chapter is relevant to several aspects of new-college-student transitions: in particular the evolution of new-student transition, who the new college student is, and the importance of recognizing their preestablished expectations. The first section of this chapter begins with an overview of the history of new-college-student transition programs. The second section explores literature on current trends in the high school-to-college transition. The third section defines the new college student and discusses the characteristics and skills that lead to student success. The final section examines other theoretical orientations to consider when addressing preestablished expectations.

#### History of College Transition Programs

College-student transition was acknowledged as early as 1888 at Boston University (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). The university instituted a program for new college students based on elements of college life, academic excellence, intellectual habits, and freshman curriculum. Peer influence and support were a major component of the transition program. Many colleges and universities followed suit and focused on academic integration of new college students. As college became more accessible to the masses, new-college-student transition programs expanded to include courses for credit. More than half of the freshman-orientation courses offered by 1926 were of the adjustment type; the balance of the courses focused on administration of the college and academics (Upcraft & Gardner).

The emphasis on new-college-student transition declined during the mid-1960s. Most of the transition programs had become obsolete or were eliminated altogether (Drake, 1966). The 1970 resurgence of transition programs ushered in the “New Student” appearing on college campuses (Felker, 1984). These new students were older adults, first-generation college students, and students who had not previously excelled in an academic setting. The new-student composition brought with it new problems of transition and adjustment to the college setting. The peer culture that had previously helped freshmen adjust seemed to lose its effectiveness (Cohen & Joby, 1978). The influx of new students also did away with the homogeneous composition of the student body on most campuses. Administrators began to look at students as individuals and tailor programs to address a wider breadth of needs during the transitional period.

The focus over the past decade has been on transition programs to help first-generation college students and minority students. First-generation college students and students of color are the fastest growing groups of students on college campuses. Gibbons and Shoffner (2004) stated that nationally, first-generation college students represent 27% of the total number of college students. Due to lack of knowledge and guidance in the college process, first-generation college students and students of color have different needs from those of students coming from families who have attended college (Inman & Mayers, 1999). Colleges and universities have answered the call by offering on-campus summer programs: mentoring, and early-intervention programs help the first-generation and minority-student populations become acquainted with the campus environment, academic demands, and the transition process.

### Current Trends in High School to College Transition

With the changing face of K–12 education, budget cuts are affecting the ability of college-bound students to transition from high school to college without experiencing some form of psychological, emotional, or physical trauma. Traditionally, high school counselors played a large role in preparing students for the transition to college. They provided counseling in the form of intervention, remedial support, and preventive management, and developed programs that enabled students to learn and use personal, social, academic, and career skills (Wittmer, 2000). However, faced with constant budget cuts and lack of support, many counselors are overwhelmed and cannot serve their student population. For example, in California, the high school counselor-to-student ratio exceeds 1:900 (California Department of Education, 2008). This leaves little or no time for counselors to help high school senior students prepare for the emotional, social, psychological, or academic issues associated with the separation or transitional stages of going to college. Levine (2005) urged high schools to focus less on college preparation (which, he pointed out, generally means college-*admissions* preparation) and instead teach life preparation, equipping adolescents with what they will need to succeed during and after college.

Upcraft et al. (2005) stated that if institutions are to challenge and support first-year students in their academic success, they must focus on both the characteristics and experiences of their students prior to college. Many colleges have recognized the need to help incoming students through the transition period by offering summer visits and freshman-orientation programs. Upcraft and Gardner (1989) commented that summer visits often entail one-day sessions in which students can schedule classes and familiarize

themselves with the campus. It is a time for college-admissions departments to finish paperwork with the students and ensure the enrollment.

For most colleges and universities, new-college-student transitions officially begin at freshman orientation. Freshman orientations are held when the new students arrive on campus just prior to the start of classes. During this period, students are given a very short course on college life and academic expectations. There is emphasis on social integration through group activities and events. Unfortunately, because of the limited schedule, there is not enough time to help the students effectively adjust or focus on the changes that could affect them psychologically. The students' preestablished expectations go unchallenged, and preconceived notions of what it is to be a college student soon leads to incongruence between their idea and reality (Keup, 2007).

Some colleges and universities have further acknowledged the problem of new-college-student transition and are proactive in offering freshman-seminar classes. The classes are part of the incoming students' first-year academic schedule. Seminars cover a range of topics including social adjustment, diversity, academic challenges, ethics, and personal growth. Other colleges and universities have instituted peer mentoring and study groups to help students develop a basis for support during the transitional period (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Carter (2009) supported the proactive approach and recommended that the high school-to-college transition period needs to be a balance of academics, social learning, and personal growth. Carter further explained that students enter college stressed from not knowing what they want or what to expect. Some stress comes from parental

pressures. Other stress comes from a lack of emotional intelligence and understanding about how to make choices or develop a plan of academic and personal success.

According to Seidman (2005), the transition from a high school to a college environment is more stressful than other environment transitions. Most new college students are not prepared for the stress they may encounter. Some may use the stress as motivation, but most students are not be skilled in the management of the high stress level often found at college. The lack of this skillset could lead to personal and or academic failure and departure from the college. Setting realistic expectations and developing coping skills while students are still in high school could eliminate much of this stress.

Seidman (2005) further suggested that institutions should help new college students to recognize their personal strengths and weaknesses. In a formal setting, this process could help students gain a greater sense of self-efficacy, which could impact how they deal with future academic, personal, and social challenges at college.

Recently, programs to help the millennial student (those born after 1984) have been developed. Using new technology like online chats and Facebook groups, colleges are disseminating information and helping students build a sense of connection with the college and each other prior to their arrival on campus. This enables new students to build a sense of community and address expectations while still surrounded by family and friends. Programs for parents of millennial students have also been developed. Parents of the millennial student are much more involved with their children's education than was previously the case, and informing and educating parents has proven beneficial in supporting students' transitions (Keeling, 2003). Parent programs often include

newsletters, personal contact by the Deans, and new parent-orientation programs. Specific transitional programs for first-generation college students, high-risk students, and transfer students have also been implemented to help these populations succeed.

#### New College Student: Millennials

According to Carlson (2005) “higher education was built for the baby boomers and previous generations under an industrial-age model. That is not what the current new college student is about” (¶ 5). Carlson discussed the importance of remembering that a new generation of college students, the millennials, have arrived.

Born between roughly 1980 and 1994, the millennials are smart but impatient. They expect results immediately (Carlson, 2005). Oblinger (2005) stated, “Millennials are digital, connected, and experiential. They demand immediacy and like to be connected socially” (¶ 1). Hunter-Hopkins (2002) commented, “Since birth, their lives have been protected, scheduled, structured, and shadowed. They are over parented, less mature 18-year-olds who think they are perfectly mature” (¶ 4). Millennials carry an arsenal of electronic devices, the more portable the better. Carlson stated, “They are able to juggle a conversation on Instant Messenger, a Web-surfing session, and an iTunes playlist while reading Twelfth Night for homework” (¶ 3).

Academically, millennial students are often underprepared for the challenges they will face at college. McCarthy and Kuh (2006) reported that millennial students do not spend a lot of time preparing for their classes. Almost half (47%) of the 170,000 high school seniors surveyed said that they spend 3 or fewer hours per week studying. This is in comparison with 50% of the first-year college students who reported spending more than 10 hours a week studying for class.

Furthermore, McCarthy and Kuh (2006) suggested that millennial students are not prepared for the amount of reading required in college. McCarthy and Kuh reported that 80% of millennial students indicated they spend 3 hours or less reading assigned materials each week. In comparison, 75% of first-year college students report reading five or more textbooks, books, or book-length packets of course readings during the current school year, with about 40% reading 11 or more.

Millennial students often find the pressures of their first year at college daunting. Keeling (2003) explained that millennial students often have high expectations, and either lofty or no goals at all. If they do have goals, they often lack realistic plans for achieving their goals. This can lead to increased stress, distress, and risky behaviors (Keeling, 2003). It is also worth noting that parental involvement in the lives of millennials exceeds that of any previous generation, which can add additional stress and pressure (Bigger, 2005).

To increase the effectiveness of the educational experience, it might be helpful for colleges to align their communication philosophy with that of the millennials. New technologies combined with traditional communication and teaching methods are already being used at many colleges. This allows colleges to continue fulfilling their ethical duty of educating students while engaging students in a way that allows them to take some control of the learning process (Oblinger, 2005, ¶ 1).

### *How Millennials Communicate*

The previous section explained that the current and upcoming generation of new college students, millennials, are digital savvy, connected, and experiential. They demand immediacy and like to be connected socially (Oblinger, 2005, ¶ 1). Some of the digital



communication tools that provide the connection and interactive experiences for millennials include (a) the Internet, (b) websites, (c) web pages, (d) iPods, (e) podcasts, (f) chat rooms, (g) instant messaging, (h) MPEG videos, (i) cell phones, (j) text messages, (k) webcams, (l) e-mail (m) Facebook, (n) Twitter, and (d) blogs. These terms are defined below.

*Blog:* A type of website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art, photographs, sketches, videos, music, and audio (Wikipedia, 2009a).

*Cell phones:* The telephone is a common form of communication, but the portability of the cell phone has made communicating between and with students even easier. Knight (2005) reported that an average of 86% of teens in larger cities own cell phones.

*Chat rooms:* A chat room is a website, part of a website, or part of an online service such as America Online or Yahoo, that provides a venue for communities of users with a common interest to communicate in real time (searchwebservices.com, 2006). Chat-room users register for the chat room, choose a user name and password, and log in.

Inside the chat room, generally there is a list of the people currently online who also are alerted that another person has entered the chat room. To chat, users type a message into a text box. The message is almost immediately visible in the larger communal message area and other users respond. Users can enter chat rooms and read messages without sending one (searchwebservices.com).

*E-mails:* E-mails give parties the ability to send text and files to specific recipients. Many colleges already use e-mails to communicate with college students about specific issues. Most colleges give a new college student a unique e-mail address, using the college's website address.

*Facebook:* Facebook is a social-networking website. Users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves (Wikipedia, 2009b).

*Instant messaging:* Instant messaging requires the use of a computer program that hooks up an instant-messaging text service and differs from e-mail in that text conversations are then able to happen in real time. The benefits of instant messaging typically boost communication and allow easy collaboration. In contrast to e-mails or telephone, the parties know whether the peer is available. Most systems allow the user to set an online status or away message so peers get notified whenever the user is available, busy, or away from the computer (Wikipedia, 2009c).

*Internet.* An electronic-communications network that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world (USRobotics, 2006). Anyone

who has a computer and access to a modem, telephone line, or broadband cable can connect to the Internet through any number of Internet services providers.

*iPod.* iPod refers to a class of portable digital audio players. Audio files are downloaded to the iPod by connecting it to a computer that uses unique software to transfer the audio information from a website or computer to the iPod. There are several different models and brands. Each has different capabilities. In addition to playing audio files, some models play videos and can store and display pictures (Wikipedia, 2009c).

*MPEG videos:* The moving-picture-experts group (MPEG) video files combine sound, text, animation, and video in a single file. The file can be posted on a website or downloaded as a podcast, or e-mailed as an attachment (Wikipedia, 2009d). They can also be embedded into a web page that when clicked on, will play while the visitor remains on the same web page. MPEGs can be played on a computer using programs such as Quicktime or Windows Media Player. These programs usually come with the computer software or are loaded free over the Internet. Newer iPods have video capability that allows the video to be played on the iPod's viewer screen.

*Podcast.* Podcasts allow anyone with a microphone and an Internet connection to create audio files that others can download automatically to their iPods, similar digital-audio players, and computer. Listeners can download files one at a time, or they can subscribe to a podcast and have a series of recordings transferred to their players whenever they hook up the devices to their computers (Read, 2005). Schools such as Stanford and Purdue have embraced podcasting as a way to accent the academic experience. Read stated,

More and more professors, are turning to the technology to record their lectures and send them to their students, in what many are calling coursecasting. The

portability of coursecasting, its proponents say, makes the technology ideal for students who fall behind in class or those for whom English is a second language. (¶ 1)

*Text Messaging:* Text messaging provides two or more parties the ability to send and receive text messages through a cell phone. The message appears on the cell phone screen after the receiver is notified and acknowledges the text message.

*Twitter:* Twitter is a free social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets to any computer or handheld device that has Internet access. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the author's subscribers who are known as followers. Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow open access (Wikipedia, 2009e).

*Webcams:* A web camera (or webcam) is a real-time camera with images that can be accessed using the Internet and a computer. Web-accessible cameras typically involve a digital camera, which uploads images to a web server either continuously or at regular intervals (Wikipedia, 2009f). A camera attached to a personal computer achieves this. Webcams allow people to have a live video and audio exchange linked through the Internet. A person does not need a webcam to view webcam broadcasts. There are many websites where users can log in to view a webcam broadcast.

*Website.* A collection of files that are arranged on the World Wide Web under a common address and allow retrieval through a browser (Expedite, 2006).

*Web pages.* A web page is a document containing text, graphics, sound, or a collection of all the above and more. These documents are written in a language called hypertext markup language (HTML), and appear in a browser when a specific web

address is entered into the browser's address window (Columbus State University, 2006). Web pages make up the content of websites.

Although millennials use and expect communication that is digital and is quickly delivered instant information that fits their schedules, they still hunger for the human touch (Kiernan, 2005). Oblinger (2005) discussed that millennials want to be connected and engaged with others, both digitally and personally. The Faculty Resource Network at New York University (2009) explained that millennials are used to being hovered over by parents. The empathy and compassion they are used to cannot be delivered digitally. Therefore, personal contact with others is still needed. Balancing the need for traditional forms of communication and social contact with new technologies is a challenge that faces most colleges today (Oblinger, 2005).

#### *How to Empower Millennials to Learn*

New college students, millennials, are used to having parameters, rules, priorities and procedures set, dictated, and enforced by parents and teachers. They have high expectations that their parents will always be available to take care of their problems (Phalen, 2002). Many new college students place a greater value on conformity than on critical thinking and decision-making skills. As a result, they often need more guidance (Keeling, 2003).

Robinson and Udall (2003) claimed that if new college students recognize the need to obtain new skills and thinking, undertake activities needed to acquire those skills, and clarify areas of support needed, the probability of completing a successful academic career is enhanced. It is important to allow new college students to take control of the transition period by leading them to learn to take responsibility and to be accountable for

themselves. By guiding them to take control of the process, new college students are empowered and feel more autonomous, from which a sense of ownership and independence can be developed (Robinson & Udall). This can result in new college students achieving a higher level of self-efficacy and locus of control.

### *Preestablished Characteristics and Challenges of Millennials*

As defined in Chapter I, *preestablished characteristics* of new college students are their perceived cognitive and behavioral expectations and abilities about being a new college student (Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1975). This also includes perceived expectations held by the new college student in about what a college student is and what a college environment entails. Internal and external forces from real and perceived authority figures create these preestablished characteristics through experience, inexperience, observation, and influence (Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1975). Preestablished characteristics of new college students usually fall into one or all of the following categories: (a) academic adjustment, (b) social adjustment, and (c) personal or emotional adjustment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

### *Academic Adjustment*

Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994), used the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire in their research to understand how students adjust academically to college. Their study of 206 new college students showed that academic adjustment includes more than a student's scholarly potential. Motivation to learn, taking action to meet academic demands, a clear sense of purpose, and general satisfaction with the academic environment are also important components of academic adjustment. Many high school students have unrealistic optimistic expectations and overestimate their

ability to adjust academically to college (Wessell, Engle, & Smidchens, 1978). Stern (1966) coined the term “freshman myth” to describe the unrealistic and overly optimistic expectations that many new college students hold prior to arriving on campus. The freshman myth is often followed by disenchantment when high expectations are not met. This is especially true in areas of course difficulty, course content, need for outside help, time management, and academic expectations (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997).

Many new college students enter an institution with little or no planning on how to succeed academically and they lack educational goals (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). They enter college as dependent learners rather than independent learners (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Due to the lack of independence, lack of planning, and minimal understanding of the college academic process, students start college believing that (a) they can depend on faculty for learning assistance; (b) the faculty will help them develop study skills; (c) they will have personal involvement with the faculty that will help lead to their success; (d) academically, college will be a repeat of high school; and (e) they will not have trouble doing well in class. These unrealistic expectations contribute to preestablished expectations, overconfidence, and lack of commitment (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997). It is this overconfidence and lack of commitment that has a detrimental effect on not only academic performance but also social, personal, and emotional adjustments.

### *Social Adjustments*

Bronfenbrenner (1979) presented the concept of ecological transition, occurring “whenever a person’s position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both” (p. 26). Bronfenbrenner also described an ecological

transition as both a consequence and an instigator of development process. The first experience a new college student is likely to encounter on a college campus is an ecological transition (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). In short, if the “sending environment” of the new college student is significantly different from the “receiving environment” of the college, the degree of stress and social anxiety will be higher. To prepare for the ecological change, new college students would hold realistic expectations of what they might encounter at college. Unfortunately, most new college students enter an academic institution overly optimistic with unrealistic expectations about the change they will experience (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997).

Larose and Boivin (1998) discussed that most new college students experience a restructuring of social ties as they leave their old worlds behind and move into college life. This can be linked to many of the adjustment problems and preestablished characteristics that new college students have. As new college students leave familiar and comfortable surroundings, there will be a decrease in perception of social support and an increase in loneliness and social anxiety (Larose & Boivin). Here, once again, the freshman myth comes into play. Krallman and Holcomb (1997) reported that new college students do not acknowledge social adjustment as a major concern. In their quantitative study of 300 freshman at a southern Florida university, they found that many students were overly optimistic. Implementing a pretest–posttest survey, before and after freshman orientation, the researchers reported that the new college students enter the institution unaware of the affects of (a) separation from family and friends, (b) managing their independence, (c) social pressure, and (e) cultural differences in the campus body.



Sixty four percent of the respondents reported that their relationship with their family would not change when they go to college. After the students completed freshman orientation, 54% reported that their relationship with their family would change. Prior to the orientation only 20% of the participants reported they would have problems managing their independence. After the orientation the number increased to 38%. When asked about social pressure, students who stated they would experience much social pressure increased from 75% to 85% after the orientation. Krallman and Holcomb (1997) also reported a similar increase in the students' awareness of cultural differences in the campus body after orientation took place. Krallman and Holcomb proposed that the increase in the participants' responses postorientation indicated that students were overly optimistic when entering the institution. The orientation made them more aware of the realistic expectations they should have.

Krallman and Holcomb (1997) discussed the overly optimistic views new college students have about their new support system and the role of faculty. As with academic adjustment, many new college students enter an institution assuming that personal involvement with the faculty will be greater than it is. New college students will look to the faculty to serve as mentors and as part of their support system. The reality of faculty interactions, the social pressure of campus life, and the perception of insufficient social support can manifest as feelings of homesickness and questioning of self-worth (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

#### *Personal or Emotional Adjustment*

Successful adjustment to college relies heavily on a new college student's individual disposition and attitudes about going to college, values, sense of purpose, and

sense of independence (Boulter, 2002). A new college student's ability to deal with and adapt to a new environment and role is a predictor of whether the student will persist (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989).

New college students enter college with preconceived ideas used to position themselves in social networks so as to better make and or adapt to the expectations of others (Godfrey, 2003). Many anticipate the role or position they held in their high school to be similar to the ones they will hold in college. Some will change their value system to be viewed as part of the group. They use their preconceived ideas to form their thoughts, behaviors, and actions. New college students often have to modify their thoughts, behaviors, and actions based on feedback from other members of the college community (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). It is during this time that new college students can experience tremendous inner turmoil that can lead to personal crisis (Henton, Lamke, Murphy, & Haynes, 1980). This inner turmoil may manifest itself as psychological distress, anxiety, somatic distress, low self-esteem, or depression (Pappas & Loving, 1985). During this period it is not uncommon for many new college students to experience (a) a decreased perception of social support, (b) increased feelings of loneliness, (c) questioning of self-worth, (d) homesickness, and (e) "friendsickness" (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

Fisher and Hood (1987) defined homesickness as "a complex cognitive-motivational-emotional state concerned with grieving for, yearning for, and being preoccupied with thoughts of home" (p. 426). For many new college students, the transition of going away to college is the first time they have lived away from family or friends. Without the perceived security associated with family and friends, new college students may question their self-efficacy and may be prone to feelings of social

disconnectedness (Crissman, 2004). Social disconnectedness is “an enduring and ubiquitous sense of interpersonal closeness with the social world” (Lee & Robins, 1995, p. 355). Paul and Brier (2001) defined *friendsickness* as “the pressing relational challenge for new college students that is induced by moving away from established networks of friends” (p. 77). Although many new college students will miss their families, there is also major importance put on the perceived loss of established friends. Paul, Poole, and Jakubowic (1998) explained that because many new college students attend different colleges and universities from their high school friends, they are concerned about maintaining these relationships. They miss the comfort of having a group of people who understand and accept them for who they are. This preoccupation with precollege friends prevents many new college students from investing in new relationships, increasing further risk of *friendsickness* and related adjustment difficulties (Paul & Brier).

The common theme that runs through many of the major preestablished expectations and challenges of new college students is their overly optimistic and unrealistic expectations. This leads to overconfidence and lack of preparedness to deal with the academic, social, and personal adjustments they may encounter. The next section of this chapter will review the skills, insight, thinking, and behaviors that would dictate a more realistic point of view for new college students.

#### *Desired Skills, Insight, Thinking, and Behaviors for New College Students*

Previously, this chapter discussed unrealistic expectations as a common theme that runs through most preestablished expectations of new college students. In the past, many college students coming directly from high school had the help of guidance counselors to assist them in setting realistic expectations (Wittmer, 2000). Unfortunately,

high school counselor-to-student ration often exceeds 1:900 (California Department of Education, 2008), and the student's expectations go unchecked. Parents, siblings, and friends also have considerable influence on the expectations and behavioral patterns that new college students bring with them to college (Upcraft et al., 2005). Getting information from so many sources can lead to misinformed and overly optimistic expectations in new college students. Institutions of higher education can have a positive influence on preestablished expectations if clear and consistent messages about academic and social expectations are delivered to the new college student prior to their arrival on campus (Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Upcraft et al.).

Students who enter institutions of higher education well-informed, motivated to learn, willing to take action to meet academic and personal demands, and with a clear sense of purpose, commitment, and goals, are more likely to persist (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Ideally, new college students would enter an academic institution with (a) realistic academic expectations, (b) educational and personal goals, (c) social-adjustment skills, and (d) personal and emotional development skills (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

#### *Realistic Academic Expectations*

With more than 40% of students arriving on college campuses needing remedial work (Schools & Colleges, 2006), the need for realistic academic expectations is imperative for new college students. Areas of understanding include expected grades, course difficulty, course content, need for outside help, self-discipline, and clarity of relationship with faculty and staff (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997). It is important that new college students enter an academic institution with a clear understanding of the differences between the high school and college academic environments. New college

students should be aware of college teaching styles and the academic demands they will encounter. Skills such as time management, self-management, note taking, and good study habits are essential tools for success (Frank, 1997). Understanding of the importance of academic advising and tutoring, including where and how to find these resources, is also important.

### *Educational and Personal Goals*

Students who have made relatively early decisions to identify clear and purposeful educational goals tend to persist when compared with those who delay academic planning (Wessell et al., 1978). The types of goals and commitments new college students have established prior to starting college are important elements in their success. Individual factors or dispositions students have on entering an institution are important factors in whether a student persists (Boulter, 2002; Ratcliff, 1991; Tinto, 1993). One important individual disposition is the student's intentions to go to college, including the extent to which the student has set educational and occupational goals and made some career decisions (Boulter). Tinto (1993) proposed that the higher the level of educational or occupational goals, the greater the probability that the student will complete college.

Another important disposition is students' commitment to meet individual goals and their willingness to comply with academic and social demands. Boulter (2002) explained that students overcame feelings of pressure, stress, and social demands if they made a personal commitment to their educational and personal goals. Students persisted when they had a sense that they were making progress toward their goals. Goal

development, goal setting, and follow through are skills that will aid in the success of new college students.

### *Social Adjustment Skills*

Integration into the social environment of an academic institution plays an important part in a new college student's persistence. Important elements of social adjustment include becoming integrated into the social life of college, forming a support network, and managing new social freedoms (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Woosley (2003) found that initial social interaction was linked to higher probabilities of degree completion. Those who seek social support have shown better adjustment to stressors (Paul & Kelleher, 1995), and the more new friends students have in their social network, the smoother the transition and adjustment to college becomes (Paul & Brier, 2001). According to Astin (1993), "The student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (p. 398). It is important that new college students understand how to make new friends and understand the social makeup of a college campus. Ideally, new college students would possess a positive self-image and be able to identify areas of social interest. Students who do not possess these skills and fail to develop a network of friends at college often report feelings of homesickness and loneliness (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt; Rich & Scovel, 1987).

Other desirable social-adjustment skills include a strong sense of self-efficacy and multicultural awareness. Bean and Eaton (2001) discussed that with a strong sense of self-efficacy, positive beliefs about one's capabilities to produce designated levels of performance will help new college students embrace the social changes they will encounter. A strong sense of self-efficacy will make it easier for new college students to

venture into new areas of social interaction, address social and peer pressure in a positive way, and use independent-thinking skills and behaviors.

Multicultural awareness is also important. Krallman and Holcomb (1997) reported in their study that 81% of the 300 new college students surveyed stated that they expected to interact with students who have similar backgrounds and values to theirs. This study reported a 20% decrease in the same response after new college students had been living on campus. A conclusion can be drawn that lack of multicultural awareness and diversity are not realized until after new college students have been on campus for some time. Many new college students, perhaps for the first time, will encounter students, faculty, staff, and community members from different cultural backgrounds, ages, religions, sexual orientations, life experiences, physical and mental abilities, races, nationalities, and ethnicities (Upcraft et al., 2005). The lack of multicultural awareness during the transition period could cause distress. It is important for a new college student to have an understanding of the multicultural realities of the collegiate environment and have the skills to tolerate and affirm differences among their classmates and other people.

Helland, Stallings, and Braxton (2002) reported that it is important that the social climate of the university be correctly portrayed by to prospective students. There should be consistency in all recruitment materials that portray the reality of the university climate rather than the desired climate. By not doing so, new college students develop unrealistic expectations that could lead to departure once they arrive on campus. They further reported that the fulfillment of social expectations by the university exerts a direct positive influence on social integration of the new college student and commitment to the university. This will affect the student's plan to reenroll after the first year.

### *Personal and Emotional Development Skills*

Pappas and Loving (1985) explained that new college students who lack personal- and emotional developmental skills may encounter psychological distress, anxiety, somatic distress, low self-esteem, or depression. The anxiety resulting from the transition to college is the major cause of new college students dropping out. Ideally, new college students would enter an academic institution with the skills needed to deal with the personal and emotional changes they will encounter. Throughout this chapter many of these skills have been discussed and include (a) a sense of commitment and motivation, (b) the ability to adapt, (c) a sense of purpose, (d) the ability to develop, set, and follow through on goals, (e) independent-thinking and learning skills, (f) social aptitude, (g) values, (h) self-discipline, (i) time-management skills, (j) study skills, and (k) multicultural awareness. It is also important that new college students have a positive sense of self-efficacy, as well as coping skills to deal with stress and pressure.

Desired skills, insight, thinking, and behaviors for new college students may vary from opinion to reality, from college to college, and from person to person. The next section of this chapter will review ways to address preestablished expectations to provide new skills, insights, thinking, and behaviors of new college students.

How we think, act, and feel are founded in theoretical orientations. In addressing preestablished expectations, behavioral theory, self-efficacy theory, and locus-of-control theory are three theories that could assist new college students to set realistic expectations, adjust preestablished characteristics, and decide what to do. These theories can be effective in short-term interventions and to learn new skills and behaviors (Corey, 2004).



### *Behavioral Theories*

Behavioral theories focus on helping people learn new behaviors, cognitions, and coping skills they can use to deal with current and future problems or behaviors (Corey, 2004). There is a strong belief that negative behaviors and emotions are learned and can be undone by learning new behaviors.

Corey (2004) stated that this process is often called “therapy,” yet it is more properly called an *educational experience*. The behavioral approach relies on a process of (a) conducting a behavioral assessment, (b) precisely specifying treatment goals, (c) formulating a specific treatment procedure appropriate to a particular problem, and (d) objectively evaluating the outcomes of therapy.

The goal of most behavioral theory is to directly target distressing symptoms, reduce stress, and reevaluate and promote helpful behavioral responses by offering problem-focused skills-based treatment interventions (Corey). The distinguishing characteristics of behavioral theories are to help the client establish individual goals and develop coping skills to address a particular behavior.

Using behavioral theories, new college students could identify negative, preestablished behaviors and develop new skills to address them. New college students could develop the skills to self-manage their behavior and thoughts and to use the processes to address current and future problems. Behavioral theories will be beneficial in helping new college students develop new coping skills. Some of these could include goal setting, stress management, study skills, assertiveness training, time management, conflict resolution, and social-skills training.

### *Self-Efficacy Theory*

Self-efficacy, defined by Bandura (1994), states that peoples' beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. As new college students prepare for college, feelings of inadequacy, questioning of self, and insecurity are inevitable.

Bandura (1994) commented that there are several effective ways of establishing a strong sense of efficacy. These include: (a) mastery of a situation or task. The more you do something successfully, the more confident you will become about your abilities in other areas, (b) strengthening and creating self-beliefs through social models. Seeing people who are similar to oneself succeed in situations or activities will raise one's beliefs of potential success, (c) positive reinforcement. Verbal feedback and encouragement can contribute to greater effort and helps to sustain the behavior, and (d) reduce emotional reactions and change interpretations of one's physical state. It is important how students interpret emotional and physical reactions to new situations and environments. New college students with a high sense of self-efficacy may view certain stressful or emotional situations as exciting or fun. Those with low self-efficacy will view similar situations as scary and fearful.

Self-efficacy theory may be beneficial for new college students by helping them master their new environment and strengthen self-beliefs through role models, social support, and positive reinforcement. The theory can also help new college students reduce stress reactions and change their interpretations of their physical state.

Gore, Leuwerke, and Turley (2006) noted that transition and integration into the new college setting can take on many forms. Important elements include getting to know and bonding with faculty and staff, getting involved with campus life and leadership opportunities, and having an academic experience that both meets expectations and is rewarding. All of these experiences result in developing strong positive college self-efficacy beliefs. Positive self-efficacy helps sustain students during times of distress or periodic failure (Gore, Leuwerke, and Turley, 2006).

### *Locus of Control Theory*

Locus of control refers to a person's expectations concerning who or what is responsible for what happens in life (Rotter, 1966). Locus of control can be divided into two separate sources of control: internal and external. An example of an internal locus of control would be a person's thought that, "The more I study, the better grades I get" (Gershaw, 1989, ¶ 4). Rotter (1966) discussed that people with an internal locus of control believe that they control their own destiny. They also believe that their own experiences are controlled by their own skill or efforts.

New college students with internal locus of control would interpret outcomes as a result of their own actions. They realize that they are responsible for themselves and their success or failure. Students who have a high internal locus of control would have better control of their behavior and tend to exhibit more acceptable behaviors than those whose locus of control is external. They are more likely to seek out and embrace new information and knowledge concerning their situation.

Students who tend to have an external locus of control attribute their experiences to luck, fate, or chance. Rotter (1966) discussed that if students attribute their successes

or failures to the college environment, such as unfair grading, “no one told me,” or crediting others for what happens, they can be said to have a high external locus of control. Perceived lack of control over one's life might lower motivation, initiative, and willingness to take risks. The chance of a successful new college-student transition may be diminished.

It is important for new college students to understand and feel that they are in control of their own life, education, and destiny (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Focusing on and creating a stronger sense of internal locus of control will help students feel more confident and able to succeed. As a result, some of the negative preestablished characteristics can be altered to create a more positive experience during the new college student's transition.

New college students who have an internal locus of control are likely to act in such a way as to achieve academic and/or social success. They are motivated to study and are often more socially integrated, which leads to a more specific set of attitudes such as “I fit in” and “I feel I made the right choice to come here; being at this school is important to me” (Bean & Eaton, 2001, p. 5).

By guiding new college students to learn about themselves, academic demands, and social expectations, they have the opportunity to become empowered and develop a greater internal locus of control. Pascarella et al. (1996) reported that students with a stronger internal locus of control will do better than their counterparts in academic performance and be more motivated to succeed.

In sum, exploring ways to address the preestablished expectations of new college students, there are many theoretical orientations that could be used to develop different

kinds of transition programs. New college students are complex and impatient. There is a limited amount of time to address preestablished expectations that new college students may hold. This suggests theories that are effective in the short term and can quickly promote new skills and behaviors. Behavioral theory, self-efficacy theory, and locus-of-control theory are three theories that could prove beneficial in helping new college students address preestablished expectations in a limited amount of time.

### Summary

The review of literature included the history and evolution of new-college-student transition programs. Empirical studies supported the description of new college students, also known as millennials. This description included how millennials communicate, and how best to empower them. The preestablished expectations and challenges millennials may face in college were also highlighted. Finally, behavioral theory, self-efficacy theory, and locus-of-control theory were examined as they relate to addressing preestablished expectations.

The literature review illustrated the importance of new-college-student transition. It provides an overview of the current data; information and concerns about how new college students' expectations about college can affect their success. This section and the previous section discussed many articles and empirical studies that relate to preestablished characteristics of new college students. A common theme of the articles and studies includes the importance of addressing the expectations of new college students as soon as possible in their academic career. However, this researcher did not find any studies that were unique to the personal, social, and academic expectations that high school seniors hold about college that were completed while the students were still

in high school. As a result, there is a lack of data on the expectations that students have about college before they spend time in their new college environment.

This study proposed to provide new data that would build on existing knowledge about the expectations of new college students. By conducting the research while the participants were still in high school, this researcher hoped to report results that would not have the limitation of other studies that took place once the students arrived on campus. Exposure to the campus environment may have limited the results of other studies.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Restatement of the Research Problem

Freshman persistence levels continue to drop and recent trends suggest incoming freshmen are experiencing higher levels of stress and distress (Boulter, 2002). An effort to bring about cognitive and behavioral changes of new college students prior to their arrival on campus has been neglected. There is an opportunity to address the preestablished expectations that high school seniors have about college while they are still surrounded by a familiar support system and social structure. To do this, more information is needed about the expectations high school seniors have about college. This study sought to identify some of the emotional, social, and academic expectations that high school seniors, also known as millennials, have about college.

#### Research Design

The methodology of this descriptive study was an online survey. An online survey was chosen because “Surveys are used to collect information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, feelings, values, and behavior” (Fink, 2006, p. 1). In this process, one can gather a great deal of information about the characteristics of a population by generalizing the results from a smaller sample (Orcher, 2007). Online surveys allow researchers to collect from a large, geographically diverse sample, while remaining cost effective. In Chapter 2, new college students or millennials were described as digital, connected, and experimental. They rely on digital communication and embrace interactive experiences. Online surveys provide this study with a methodology that can take place where our sample is: online (Oblinger, 2005).

The research design consisted of a 30-item online survey instrument. It examined high school seniors' expectations about college in three major areas: (a) academic expectations, (b) personal expectations, and (c) social expectations. Using a five-point rating scale ranging from *not at all likely* to *extremely likely*, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they expect to experience situations explained in each question. Appendix A provides a hard copy of the survey. The online survey contained the same questions and general format of the hard-copy survey, however no social security numbers were collected in the online survey. H&H Publishing (2008) holds the rights to the survey and hosts the survey on their website.

The survey was self-administered by high school seniors, also known as millennials, who have expressed interest in attending a particular school at a large private university in Southern California. The population was asked to participate in the study through an e-mail sent by the researcher. A link was embedded in the e-mail that took the participants to a landing page that hosted the survey. The survey was untimed and the participants could stop taking the survey at anytime.

### Research Setting

The Southern California university used in this study is a private, large-sized, residential, research institution with approximately 16,500 undergraduate students. The university offers bachelor's degrees in architecture, arts, fine arts, music, and science. The student-to-faculty ratio is 10:1. Of 16,500 undergraduate students, 2,963 were reported to be first-time freshmen at the university for the school year 2007–2008. The gender ratio of first time freshmen was 53% female to 46% male. The largest ethnic groups included White/Caucasian (46%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (27%), and Hispanic



(10%). First-time freshmen came from around the world, but 55% were from California while only 6% were international students. The remaining students came from states other than California. During 2007–2008 the mean range on the SAT was 1910–2180.

### Population

All high school seniors who expressed interest in a particular school of the university between January 1, 2008 and November 30, 2008 were used as the population for this study. This time period was chosen as it is the period identified by the school as the time that most high school seniors inquire about applying to the school. The dates were also selected on the basis that December 1, 2008 was the application deadline to be selected into the Fall 2009 freshman class.

The list included 1,164 high school seniors who were over the age of 18. All 1,164 students had provided an e-mail address and indicated that they were currently high school seniors. The population was approximately 60% male and 40% female. Forty-five percent of the population self-reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian. The balance of the population included Asian/Pacific Islander (10%), Black/African American (8%), Hispanic (6%), and Unknown/Other (31%). The majority of the population (47%) reported their permanent residence in California. Only 3% reported being from outside the United States. The remaining portion of the population reported residency in states other than California or did not report.

### Sample

A sample from the population was identified as those who responded to an e-mail sent by the researcher. The e-mail explained the purpose of the research and asked the population to participate by taking the online survey. Because the entire population

received the e-mail at the same time, all members had an equal chance of participating. The survey yielded an initial return of 126 respondents; however only 112 submitted completed surveys.

The sample was made up of male ( $n = 51$ ) and female ( $n = 61$ ) high school seniors who were all 18 years old. Fifty-seven percent of the population self-reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian. The balance of the population included Asian/Pacific Islander (16%), Black/African American (6.5%), and Hispanic (20.5%). There were no other ethnicities reported. Table 1 represents the ethnicities reported by the sample.

Table 1

*Ethnicity of Sample*

Ethnicity	<i>f</i>	%
White/Caucasian	64	57.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	18	16.1
Black/African American	7	6.3
Hispanic	23	20.5

The majority of the sample (51%) reported their permanent residence in the West and Midwest region. Twenty-two percent reported being from the Northeast and the remaining 21% reported being from the South. There were no students reporting their permanent residence outside of the United States. Table 2 represents the states associated with each region, reported by USA Study Guide (2009).

GPA's were also collected from the sample. The sample self-reported their high school GPA. The GPA's included a minimum of 2.09 and a maximum of 4.60,  $R = 2.51$ ,

$M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .42$ . Although the standard GPA scale is 0–4, some students reported a higher score based on a weighted GPA. Some high schools give extra points to grades from honors, accelerated, international baccalaureate, or advanced-placement classes (Petersons, 2009).

Table 2

*Regions and Associated States*

Region	States
West and Midwest	Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, South Dakota
Northeast	Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC
South	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study is the Perceptions, Expectations, Emotions, and Knowledge (PEEK) survey. Weinstein, Palmer, and Hanson (1995) developed PEEK at the University of Texas at Austin. Appendix A provides a hard-copy sample of the survey.

The PEEK explores a student's perceptions and expectations of what their college experiences and environment will be like for them. Many students enter higher education with unrealistic expectations that can lead to academic difficulties or disillusionment, which can result in withdrawal. If we can help identify some of these possible sources of unconfirmed expectations, we could intervene and try to help students gain a more realistic understanding of what attending their college is going to be like on an academic, personal, and social level. (H&H Publishing, 2008, p. 2)

The PEEK is a 30-item online Likert-scale survey. It seeks to identify the expectations and beliefs that new students hold about college. The PEEK is a

carefully developed web administered instrument for assessing thoughts, beliefs, and expectations about the personal, social, and academic changes that may occur in a college setting. The PEEK has been developed over a 7-year period. More than 5,000 student affairs specialists, high school teachers, developmental educators, and college faculty have assisted in the creation of the item pool and the refinement of the instrument. In addition, the items and scales have been statistically analyzed to help their psychometric properties. (Weinstein et al., 1995, p. 1)

The participants were assessed in three categories: (a) Academic Expectations (ACA), (b) Personal Expectations (PER), and (c) Social Expectations (SOC).

Academic Experiences—expectations about the difficulty of college courses, the nature of learning in college, the roles and responsibilities of college instructors, and the nature of instruction in college.

Personal Experiences—expectations about the emotional reactions to college, the degree to which the student is prepared to do college-level work, how college fits into future goals, and the degree to which students must take personal responsibility for their own learning.

Social Experiences—expectations about social pressures in college, interactions between students and instructors, the nature and make-up of college populations, and relationships between students and their family/friends. (H&H Publishing, 2008, p. 3)

The participants were asked to respond to the online questions by checking the box next to one of the five levels of their agreement to the questions. The five levels of perceptions ranged from “extremely likely to be part of my college experience” to “not at all likely to be part of my college experience.”

### Reliability

This researcher contacted the creators of the instrument as well as H&H Publishing to inquire about the reliability of the instrument. Appendix B provides a copy of the electronic communication, which explains why no reliability exists. This document was sent to the researcher from H&H Publishing. The document describes the

development of the survey and the care taken to provide a useable measurement tool. It further discusses reliability. The excerpt below highlights the issue of reliability.

Since the PEEK assesses expectations, and expectations vary from institution to institution, reliability and validity studies were not done on the instrument.

Unlike most inventories, there are no national norms or “correct” responses. PEEK scores will be unique to each institution or peer group within that institution. (Ealy, 2008)

The researcher believed it was important to identify the reliability of the instrument. With this in mind, the researcher ran a Cronbach’s alpha reliability test on the PEEK using the entire sample population. The results indicated that the PEEK does not show strong reliability ( $\alpha = .32$ ). The widely accepted social science cut-off is that alpha should be .70 for a set of items to be considered a scale. However, some researcher accept an alpha as low as .50 (deVaus, 2002). The low alpha score indicates that the items in the PEEK are not measuring the same thing and the survey has a multidimensional structure.

The findings of a multidimensional structure are consistent with the structure of the PEEK. Although the authors set out to measure expectations in three distinct areas, they chose questions for these areas that were not unidimensional. The specific areas are not singularly focused. The authors’ description of the survey (H&H Publishing, 2008, p. 3), presented above, describes the three areas of the survey. In each area are several subsections of questions that are unrelated to each other. As a result, the areas are not measuring the same underlying latent construct.

### Validity

This researcher contacted the creators of the instrument as well as H&H Publishing to inquire about the validity of the instrument. H&H Publishing could not

provide a validity report, but stated that authors found validity in the instrument with the help of over 5,000 academic professionals who assisted in creating and refining the instrument. They referenced the section quoted above (Weinstein et al., 1995, p. 1) for further clarification. Furthermore, the PEEK has been repeatedly used to measure the expectations about college since 1995 (H&H Publishing Company, 2006). Although validity for the instrument has not been reported, due to the continuous use it can be said to have face validity. Patten (2005) states that face validity is used when an instrument appears to measure what it purports to measure on the “face of it”.

#### Data Collection

Data for this study was collected in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University of San Francisco’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS). After IRBPHS approval, the researcher sent an e-mail explaining the request to participate in the study to the population (see Appendix C). After the initial e-mail was sent, reminder e-mails asking the population to take the survey were sent 3 days and 6 days after the first e-mail (see Appendix E).

The e-mails explained the intent of the survey. They also informed prospective participants that the survey was anonymous and that no individual identities would be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. The e-mail informed each participant that their participation was voluntary and that they could stop any time during the process. If the participants agreed to take part in the research, they clicked on a website link included in the text of the e-mail. This link took them to the PEEK online survey hosted by H&H Publishing (2008). H&H Publishing holds the rights to the survey

and hosts the survey on their website, [http://www.hhpublishing.com/\\_assessments/index.html](http://www.hhpublishing.com/_assessments/index.html).

When participants completed the survey, the data was collected and reported to the researcher by H&H Publishing. Results were delivered to the researcher electronically. The results included the raw data and the PEEK distribution report. This information was used for the data analysis.

Although all 1,164 students received the invitation to participate, only the first 120 surveys were considered for this research. After the 120th survey was taken, the survey was closed. Those who tried to take the survey after it was closed received notice that the survey had been completed.

#### Data Analysis

The data from the online survey was collected by H&H Publishing Company. The distribution report and raw data were used to answer the research questions:

1. What are the academic expectations that high school seniors have about college?
2. What are the personal expectations that high school seniors have about college?
3. What are the social expectations that high school seniors have about college?
4. How do gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA effect the expectations that high school seniors have about college?

The survey is organized into three categories with 10 questions related to the academic, personal, and social expectations that high school seniors have about college. The survey questions are ordered so that every third question relates to a specific

category of expectations. Table 3 summarizes the order of questions as they relate to the specific categories.

Table 3

*Assignment of Question Order to Each Category*

Academic expectations	Personal expectations	Social expectations
1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, and 28	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, and 29	3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, and 30

The results from the survey were machine scored by H&H Publishing Company.

The answers to each question were weighted as described in Table 4.

Table 4

*Weighting For Answers to Survey Questions*

Weight	Answer
0	No answer
1	Not at all likely
2	Not very likely
3	Somewhat likely
4	Quite likely
5	Extremely likely

Each category had 10 questions with a combined weighted range ( $R$ ) of 0–50. The weighting was used to establish the mean ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ) used for comparison and correlations for the research questions. The authors of the PEEK developed the following range guidelines to identify how the mean scores of each category relate to the students expectations.



Any score in the upper range (36–50) suggests that it is highly likely that one's experiences will generally match their expectations for those activities described by the items in a category. In general, scores in the upper range indicate realistic expectations for experiences associated with this category.

Any score in the midrange (25–35) suggests that it is somewhat likely that one's experiences will match their expectations for those activities described by the items in a category. A score in the midrange indicates that many of one's expectations are realistic, but there will probably be some unexpected experiences associated with this category.

Any score in the lower range (10–24) suggests that it is somewhat unlikely that one's experiences will match their expectations for those activities described by the items in a category. A score in the lower range indicates that some expectations are unrealistic and there may be some unexpected experiences associated with this category (Weinstein et al., 1995).

H&H Publishing provided the researcher with a PEEK distribution report. The distribution report shows the 10 items of the category with the data obtained for that category. The number of responses for each choice and the percentage of the group that selected each choice accompany each item. A category summary is provided for each category, which shows the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation.

The researcher used the data from the distribution report and converted it into identifiable patterns of the responses from the participants. Both high and low percentages of the sample's responses to each question were identified. Common themes and an interpretation of the sample population's expectations about college are reported. This data was used to answer the descriptive Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. The raw

data was used to answer the correlations in Research Question 4. The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to compute the correlations between the variables in Question 4. *T*-Tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compute the correlations. The *t*-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. The ANOVA tests whether the means among several groups are equal.

### Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of this descriptive research design. It described the online survey, PEEK, as the instrument used in the study. The design of the survey was discussed as well as the research setting, population, and sample. An overview of the data-collection process and how the data was analyzed was also provided. The following chapters will discuss the profile of participants and research findings, and includes discussion, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to gain new insight into the emotional, social, and academic expectation that high school seniors, also known as millennials, have about college. The researcher used the online version of the PEEK survey, a 30-item online Likert-scale survey. It seeks to identify the expectations and beliefs that new students hold about college.

The researcher used the PEEK to investigate the (a) academic expectations that high school seniors have about college, (b) the personal expectations that high school seniors have about college, and (c) the social expectations that high school seniors have about college. The researcher also sought to understand how gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA of high school seniors affect the expectations they have about college.

#### Research Question Findings

##### *Research Question #1*

Q1. What are high school seniors' academic expectations about college? There are 10 items on academic expectations in the PEEK providing data to answer this question. The results for this question are presented in Table 5 and the following pages.

The ACA category of the PEEK contained 10 items that measured the high school seniors' academic expectations about college. The expectations included the difficulty of college courses, the nature of learning in college, the roles and responsibilities of college instructors, and the nature of instruction in college.

Table 5

*Academic Expectations*

Question	Not at all likely		Not very likely		Somewhat likely		Quite likely		Extremely likely	
	N	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. My college grades should be about the same as were my high school grades	112	4.5	5	6.3	7	25.9	29	45.5	20	17.9
4. If I am having difficulty in a course, the instructor will tell me.	112	14.3	16	36.6	41	33.9	38	14.3	1	0.9
7. The material presented by my instructors will simply repeat what is in my textbooks.	112	17.0	19	50.9	57	25.0	28	6.3	1	9.0
10. My college instructors will be very concerned about how well I am doing in their courses.	112	15.2	17	37.5	42	34.8	39	10.7	2	1.8
13. I will not have trouble doing well in any of my courses.	112	8.0	9	31.3	35	41.1	46	19.6	0	0.0
16. It will be more important to memorize what is being presented in my class than to think about it.	112	33.9	38	46.4	52	13.4	15	5.4	1	0.9
19. My college instructors will teach me the study skills I will need for their courses.	112	28.6	32	35.7	40	23.2	26	10.7	2	1.8
22. There will be frequent opportunities to talk to my college instructors.	112	2.7	3	19.6	22	42.0	47	32.1	4	3.5

Question	N	Not at all likely		Not very likely		Somewhat likely		Quite likely		Extremely likely	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
25. My college instructors will keep track for me of how well I am following the class syllabus and keeping up with my assignments.	112	42	37.5	45	40.2	21	18.8	4	3.6	0	0.0
28. I will have to check to see if I understand the material in my textbooks and other reading assignments.	112	1	0.9	4	3.6	35	31.3	55	49.1	17	15.2

In response to the survey, almost half of the respondents (45.5%,  $n = 51$ ) indicated that their college grades should be about the same as they were in high school. Secondly, 41% ( $n = 46$ ) of the respondents reported that it was somewhat likely that they would not have trouble doing well in any of their courses. Forty percent ( $n = 45$ ) of the respondents noted that it was not very likely that their college instructors will keep track of how well they are following the syllabus and keeping up with assignments. Surprisingly, 47% ( $n = 53$ ) of the respondents reported that their instructors will be concerned about how well they are doing in their courses. Forty eight percent ( $n = 55$ ) noted that if they are having difficulty in a course, the instructor would tell them. Furthermore, 74% ( $n = 83$ ) of the respondents indicated that there would be frequent opportunities to talk to their college professors.

Interestingly, 23% ( $n = 26$ ) of respondents indicated that it was somewhat likely that their college instructors will teach them the study skills they will need for their courses. Fifty percent ( $n = 57$ ) of the respondents indicated that material presented by their instructor is not very likely to simply repeat what is in the textbook. Forty-six percent ( $n = 52$ ) of the respondents noted that it was not very likely that it was more important to memorize what is being presented in their class than to think about it. Almost half (49%,  $n = 55$ ) indicated that it was quite likely that they will have to check to see if they understand the material in their textbooks and other reading assignments.

Using SPSS this researcher computed the range, mean, and standard deviation for the ACA category. To do so, the research used the weighted values of the answers and identified that the minimum score was 27 while the maximum was 41,  $R = 14$ ,  $M = 33.21$ ,  $SD = 2.66$  for the ACA category.

*Research Question #2*

Q2. What are the personal expectations that high school seniors have about college? There are 10 items asking questions about personal expectations in the PEEK, which provided data to answer this question. The results for this question are presented in Table 6 and the following pages.

The PER category of the PEEK contained 10 items that measured the high school seniors' personal expectations about college. These included emotional reactions to college, the degree to which students are prepared to do college-level work, how college fits into future goals, and the degree to which students must take personal responsibility for their own learning.

In response to the survey, almost 34% ( $n = 38$ ) of the respondents indicated that it is somewhat likely, while 29% ( $n = 33$ ) reported that it is quite likely that they will not need any outside help to do well in their courses. Thirty-eight percent ( $n = 43$ ) of the respondents reported that it was quite likely that the reading skills they developed in high school will be adequate for their college courses. Another 34.8% ( $n = 39$ ) noted that it was extremely likely that their reading skills were adequate. Forty-one percent ( $n = 46$ ) of the respondents indicated that it is not very likely that it will be difficult to have the self-discipline to keep academic commitments, such as attending classes and being prepared for classes. Almost 62% ( $n = 69$ ) of the respondents noted that they would have to take a lot of responsibility for their own learning. Thirty-two percent ( $n = 36$ ) of the respondents indicated that it is quite likely that they will have to generate their own interest in their college courses. More than half (58%,  $n = 65$ ) of the respondents reported that it is not likely at all that they are worried that they won't make it through college.

Table 6

*Personal Expectations*

Question	N	Not at all likely		Not very likely		Somewhat likely		Quite likely		Extremely likely	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2. I will not need any outside help to do well in my courses.	112	7	6.3	30	26.8	38	33.9	33	29.5	4	3.6
5. I will know exactly how college fits into my future goals and plans.	112	4	3.6	15	13.4	36	32.1	30	26.8	27	24.1
8. It will be difficult to discipline myself to keep academic commitments, such as attending classes and being prepared for class.	112	35	31.3	46	41.1	17	15.2	11	9.8	3	2.7
11. I will have to take a lot of responsibility for my own learning.	112	1	0.9	1	0.9	4	3.6	37	33	69	61.6
14. There is nothing I will rather be doing than getting my college degree.	112	12	12.5	17	15.2	23	20.5	34	30.4	24	21.4
17. I will have to generate my own interest in my college courses.	112	6	5.4	25	22.3	28	25.0	36	32.1	17	15.2
20. I will sometimes feel overwhelmed by the workload.	112	1	0.9	4	3.6	14	12.5	52	46.4	41	36.6
23. I will not feel stressed in college.	112	55	49.1	40	35.7	15	13.4	2	1.8	0	0.0



Question	<i>N</i>	Not at all likely <i>f</i>	%	Not very likely <i>f</i>	%	Somewhat likely <i>f</i>	%	Quite likely <i>f</i>	%	Extremely likely <i>f</i>	%
26. I am worried that I won't make it through college	112	65	58.0	31	27.7	11	9.8	2	1.8	3	2.7
29. The reading skills I developed in high school will be adequate for my college courses.	112	4	3.6	7	6.3	19	17.0	43	38.4	39	34.8

When asked about how college fits into their future, 32% ( $n = 36$ ) indicated that they know exactly how college fits into their future goals and plans. In addition, 30% ( $n = 34$ ) of the respondents reported it was quite likely that there is nothing they'd rather be doing than getting a college degree. Interestingly, almost 50% ( $n = 55$ ) indicated that it is not likely at all that they won't feel stressed in college and 46% ( $n = 52$ ) reported it is quite likely they will sometimes feel overwhelmed by the workload.

Using SPSS this researcher computed the range, mean, and standard deviation for the PER category. To do so, the research used the weighted values of the answers and identified the minimum score as 22 and the maximum as 40,  $R = 22$ ,  $M = 29.66$ ,  $SD = 3.99$  for the PER category.

### *Research Question #3*

Q3. What are the social expectations that high school seniors have about college? There are 10 items about social expectations in the PEEK, which provided data to answer this question. The results for this question are presented in Table 7 and the following pages.

The SOC subscale of the PEEK contained 10 items that measured high school seniors' expectations about college. These included the social pressures in college, interactions between students and instructors, the nature and composition of the college population, and relationships between students and their family/friends.

Table 7

*Social Expectations*

Question	N	Not at all likely		Not very likely		Somewhat likely		Quite likely		Extremely likely	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
3. I will have to work at making new friends	112	9	8.0	29	25.9	30	26.8	29	25.9	15	13.4
6. My relationship with my family will not change when I go to college.	112	12	10.7	36	32.1	24	21.4	29	25.9	11	9.8
9. My relationships with my high school friends will not change when I go to college.	112	31	27.7	37	33.0	31	27.7	12	10.7	1	0.9
12. Most of my classmates will have values similar to mine.	112	7	6.3	30	26.8	49	43.8	23	20.5	3	2.7
15. I expect to be treated more like a number and less like a person.	112	33	29.5	31	27.7	38	33.9	8	7.0	2	1.8
18. In college I will join fewer student organizations than I joined in high school.	112	27	24.1	40	35.7	26	23.2	11	9.8	8	7.1
21. I will experience a lot of social pressures in college.	112	6	5.4	20	17.9	32	28.6	42	37.5	12	10.7
24. I will be exposed to students with a wide range of ages.	112	3	2.7	20	17.9	35	31.3	38	33.9	16	14.3

Question	<i>N</i>	Not at all likely <i>f</i>	%	Not very likely <i>f</i>	%	Somewhat likely <i>f</i>	%	Quite likely <i>f</i>	%	Extremely likely <i>f</i>	%
27. I will meet students with many different cultural backgrounds.	112	1	0.9	2	1.8	15	13.4	27	24.1	67	59.8
30. My college instructors will get to know me on a personal level.	112	4	3.6	30	26.8	50	44.6	24	21.4	4	3.6

In response to the survey, almost 27% ( $n = 30$ ) of the respondents indicated that it is somewhat likely, while 26% ( $n = 29$ ) reported that it is quite likely that they will have to work at making new friends. Forty-five percent ( $n = 50$ ) reported that it is somewhat likely that their college instructors will get to know them on a personal level. However, almost 34% ( $n = 38$ ) indicated that it would be somewhat likely that they will be treated more like a number and less like a person. Almost 36% ( $n = 40$ ) reported that it is not very likely that they will join fewer student organizations than they did in high school.

When asked about their relationship to their family, 32% ( $n = 36$ ) of the respondents reported that it was not very likely that their relationship with their family will not change. Another 26% ( $n = 29$ ) noted that it was quite likely that their relationship with their family will not change. In regard to relationships with high school friends, almost 28% ( $n = 31$ ) of the respondents indicated that it is not at all likely, while another 28% ( $n = 31$ ) indicated it is somewhat likely that their relationships with their high school friends will not change when they go to college. Almost 44% ( $n = 49$ ) of the respondents noted that it is somewhat likely that most of their classmates will have similar values to theirs. Thirty-four percent ( $n = 38$ ) of the respondents indicated that it is quite likely that they will be exposed to students with a wide range of ages. More than half (59.8%,  $n = 67$ ) of the respondents reported that it is extremely likely that they will meet students with many different cultural backgrounds.

When asked about social pressure, 37% ( $n = 42$ ) indicated that it was quite likely and 11% ( $n = 12$ ) indicated that it was extremely likely that they will experience a lot of social pressures at college. Interestingly, those who indicated not at all likely ( $n = 6$ ) and

not very likely ( $n = 20$ ) to experience a lot of social pressure in college equated to 23% of the respondents.

Using SPSS this researcher computed the range, mean, and standard deviation for the SOC category. To do so, the research used the weighted values of the answers and identified the minimum score of 26 and the maximum of 43,  $R = 21$ ,  $M = 34.59$ ,  $SD = 3.28$  for the SOC category.

#### *Research Question #4*

Q4. How do gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA effect the expectations that high school seniors have about college? The data collected from each of the categories in the PEEK were correlated against the four variables: (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) geographic region, and (d) GPA to answer this question.

The researcher used SPSS to compute the correlations between the variables in Question 4. *T*-Tests, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to compute the correlations. The *t*-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. The ANOVA tests whether the means among several groups are all equal. Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. Below are the findings of how the variables in Question 4 affect the expectations that high school seniors have about college. Tables 8 and 9 further demonstrate some of the findings.

#### *Gender*

An independent-sample *t*-test showed there were no significant differences between males ( $M = 33.3$ ,  $SD = 2.8$ ) and females ( $M = 33.1$ ,  $SD = 2.6$ ) in ACA,  $t(110) = 0.58$ ,  $p > .05$ . The *t*-test also showed there were no significant differences

between males ( $M = 30.0$ ,  $SD = 4.1$ ) and females ( $M = 29.4$ ,  $SD = 3.9$ ) in PER,  $t(110) = 0.82$ ,  $p > .05$ . Furthermore, an independent samples  $t$ -test showed there were no significant differences between males ( $M = 34.9$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ) and females ( $M = 34.3$ ,  $SD = 3.2$ ) in SOC,  $t(110) = 0.92$ ,  $p > .05$ . Table 8 further illustrates the findings.

Table 8

*Relationship Between Gender, Academic Expectations, Personal Expectations, and Social Expectations*

Gender	Academic M ( <i>SD</i> )	Personal M ( <i>SD</i> )	Social M ( <i>SD</i> )
Male	33.3 (2.8)	30.0 (4.1)	34.9 (3.4)
Female	33.1 (2.6)	29.4 (3.9)	34.3 (3.2)

*Ethnicity*

An ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between ethnicity and ACA for college. Four ethnic categories were included: Asian ( $M = 33.5$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ), Black ( $M = 32.3$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ), Hispanic ( $M = 33.6$ ,  $SD = 3.7$ ), and White ( $M = 33.1$ ,  $SD = 2.5$ ). There were no differences in academic expectations by ethnicity ( $F = 0.56$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

An ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between ethnicity and PER for college. Four ethnic categories were included: Asian ( $M = 30.5$ ,  $SD = 4.0$ ), Black ( $M = 29.7$ ,  $SD = 5.5$ ), Hispanic ( $M = 30.4$ ,  $SD = 4.5$ ), and White ( $M = 29.1$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ). There were no differences in personal expectations by ethnicity ( $F = 0.91$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Lastly, an ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between ethnicity and SOC for college. Four ethnic categories were included: Asian ( $M = 35.7$ ,  $SD = 3.8$ ),

Black ( $M = 31.9$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ), Hispanic ( $M = 34.4$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ), and White ( $M = 34.6$ ,  $SD = 3.0$ ). Although not statistically significant at the alpha level of .05 set *a priori*, the relationship between SOC and ethnicity was marginally significant ( $F = 2.36$ ,  $p = .08$ ).

Table 9 further illustrates the findings.

Table 9

*Relationship Between Ethnicity and ACA, PER, SOC Expectations*

Ethnicity	Academic	Personal	Social
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Asian	33.5 (2.2)	30.5 (4.0)	35.7 (3.8)
Black	32.3 (1.1)	29.7 (5.5)	31.9 (3.6)
Hispanic	33.6 (3.7)	30.4 (4.5)	34.4 (3.4)
White	33.1 (2.5)	29.1 (3.6)	34.6 (3.0)

*Region*

An ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between region and ACA for college. Three regions of the country were included: West/Midwest ( $M = 32.8$ ,  $SD = 2.8$ ), Northeast ( $M = 33.6$ ,  $SD = 2.3$ ), and South ( $M = 33.6$ ,  $SD = 2.8$ ). There were no differences in academic expectations by region ( $F = 0.96$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

An ANOVA was also conducted to examine the relationship between region and PER for college. Three regions of the country were included: West/Midwest ( $M = 29.5$ ,  $SD = 4.4$ ), Northeast ( $M = 29.1$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ), and South ( $M = 30.6$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ). There were no differences in personal expectations by region ( $F = 0.96$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

A final ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between region and SOC for college. Three regions of the country were included: West/Midwest ( $M = 35.0$ ,



$SD = 3.1$ ), Northeast ( $M = 33.8$ ,  $SD = 3.0$ ), and South ( $M = 34.2$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ). There were no differences in social expectations by region ( $F = 1.4$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Table 10 further illustrates the findings.

Table 10

*Relationship Between Region and Academic Expectations, Personal Expectations, and Social Expectations*

Region	Academic M ( <i>SD</i> )	Personal M ( <i>SD</i> )	Social M ( <i>SD</i> )
West/Midwest	32.8 (2.8)	29.5 (4.4)	35.0 (3.1)
Northeast	33.6 (2.3)	29.1 (3.4)	33.8 (3.0)
South	33.6 (2.8)	30.6 (3.6)	34.2 (3.6)
F(p)	.96	.96	1.4

#### *GPA*

Pearson's correlation showed there was no linear relationship between high school GPA and ACA ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p > .05$ ). It also showed there was no linear relationship between high school GPA and PER ( $r = -.03$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Furthermore, a Pearson correlation showed there was no linear relationship between high school GPA and SOC ( $r = .16$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

#### Summary of Findings

Research Question 1 asked, What are the academic expectations that high school seniors have about college? The data reported by the participants indicated that most students are confident in their academic ability to succeed in college. They expect their grades to be about the same as those in high school and are not troubled about doing well

in their courses. Participants reported that they expect their instructors to care about how well they are doing in courses and show concern. They also expect instructors to be available to meet with them.

Research Question 2 asked, What are the personal expectations that high school seniors have about college? Participants reported that they would not need help to do well in their courses. They indicated that they would not have problems with self-discipline and taking responsibility for their academic success. The majority of the participants indicated that there was nothing else they would rather be doing than going to college. They also knew exactly how college fit into their future plans. However, the majority of participants reported that they would feel overwhelmed and stressed by the course workload.

Research Question 3 asked, What are the social expectations that high school seniors have about college? When asked about social expectations, the majority of the participants indicated that they would not have problems making new friends. They also expect to meet a diverse group of students including those of other ethnicities, cultures, and ages. They indicated that college instructors would get to know them on a personal level. The participants were unsure about how their relationship with their family would change; some thought their relationship would change, while others did not. Most participants indicated that their friendship with their high school friends would not change dramatically. More than the majority of the participants reported that they would experience social pressure. Surprisingly, close to 23% reported they would not experience any social pressure.

Question 4 asked, How do gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA effect the expectations that high school seniors have about college? After an analysis of the data, this researcher found that there was no difference in the expectations of participants as a result of their gender, ethnicity, geographic region, or GPA.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the research, and includes the major conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter IV. The first section is a discussion of the general findings from which conclusions were drawn by the researcher. The proceeding sections describe recommendations for professional practices and future research.

#### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the academic, personal, and social expectations that high school seniors have about college. The study looked at these expectations through a descriptive lens of the entire sample population. The study further examined the correlation of these expectations for the sample population by gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA.

The academic expectations examined included the high school seniors' motivation to learn, educational goals, level of confidence, understanding of their role, and understanding of the faculty's role. The personal expectations examined included individual disposition and attitudes about going to college. The social expectations examined included the high school seniors' attitude about managing their independence, social pressure, and cultural differences.

The methodology of this descriptive study was an online survey. The instrument used in this study is the PEEK survey. The survey was self-administered by high school seniors, also know as millennials, who had expressed interest in attending a particular school at a large private university in Southern California. The population was asked to

participate in the study through an e-mail sent by the researcher. The survey yielded an initial return of 126 respondents; however only 112 submitted completed surveys.

The researcher converted the data collected and into identifiable patterns of the responses from the participants. Both high and low percentages of the sample's responses to each question were indentified. Common themes and an interpretation of the sample population's expectations about college are reported. This data was used to answer the descriptive Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. The raw data was used to answer the correlations in Research Question 4.

As a result of the analysis of the data, the researcher drew a number of conclusions. However, this chapter begins with a discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions.

## Discussion

### *Research Question 1*

This question sought to identify the academic expectations that high school seniors have about college. The expectations included the difficulty of college courses, the nature of learning in college, the roles and responsibilities of college instructors, and the nature of instruction in college. Table 5 provides the data set for this question.

This study found that participants show a high level of confidence in their academic ability. They expect their grades to be consistent with those from high school, they don't expect to have problems doing well in their courses, they believe their instructors will monitor and be concerned about their success, and they won't need outside help to do well in their courses.

These findings are consistent with Krallman and Holcomb (1997). Krallman and Holcomb reported that students enter college with unrealistic expectations about their ability to manage course difficulty, course content, need for outside help, time management and academic expectations. These expectations are often overly optimistic leading students to find themselves disillusioned about their academic ability once they experience college courses. This leaves many new students struggling to adjust to their new environment (Keup, 2007). As a result, 34% will drop out in the first year (American College Testing Program, 2008). Dingfelder (2004) reported that close to 15% of freshman drop out because of failing grades.

The findings in this study also support Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) statement that many freshmen enter college as dependent learners instead of independent learners. Students start college believing that (a) they can depend on faculty for learning assistance; (b) the faculty will help them develop study skills; (c) they will have personal involvement with the faculty in achieving success; (d) academically, college will be a repeat of high school; and (e) they will not have trouble doing well in class.

In particular, 33% of participants in the study indicated that faculty will help them develop the study skills needed for their courses. Almost 71% indicated that their college instructors will get to know them personally. They expect their instructors to look after them and let them know if they are not doing well in their courses. The participants also believe that their grades will be the same as in high school and their reading skills will be adequate for college-level courses.

### *Research Question 2*

This question sought to understand the personal expectations that high school seniors have about college. The data collected included the emotional reactions to college, the degree to which students are prepared to do college-level work, how college fits into future goals, and the degree to which students must take personal responsibility for their own learning. The data set for this question is presented in Table 6.

Participants reported that they would not need help to do well in their courses. They indicated that they would not have problems with self-discipline and taking responsibility for their academic success.

It is important to keep in mind Hunter-Hopkins' (2002) comments about millennial students. The researcher stated that that "Since birth, millennial students' lives have been protected, scheduled, structured, and shadowed. They are overparented, less mature 18-year-olds who think they are perfectly mature" (¶ 4). Parents control the amount of independence the millennial student has and also dictate goals for their students during high school. They hold their student accountable when it comes to studying and academic discipline.

Although this study reports that students are confident about their abilities, an important variable is being removed as they go to college. That variable is parent involvement and monitoring on a daily basis. Without this variable, new college students may find managing their independence and self-discipline more difficult than they expect.

Interestingly, the majority of participants reported that they would feel overwhelmed and stressed by the course workload. Although the participants were self-

confident in their ability to succeed, they were realistic in their expectations about the amount of stress they may experience.

This is consistent with Boulter (2002) who reported that there has been a sharp increase in the number of freshman who sought personal counseling for stress-related factors. Boulter reported that 41.1% of freshmen seek some kind of stress-management counseling during their first year.

### *Research Question 3*

Question 3 sought to identify the social expectations that high school seniors have about college. These included the social pressures in college, interactions between students and instructors, the nature and composition of college populations, and relationships between students and their family/friends. The dataset for this question is presented in Table 7.

When asked about social expectations, the majority of the participants indicated that they would not have problems making new friends. They also indicated that they expect that college instructors would get to know them on a personal level.

In this study, the majority of the participants indicated that they would not have problems making new friends. The participants were unsure about how their relationship with their family would change, but most indicated that their friendship with their high school friends would not change dramatically.

These findings are similar to those of Krallman and Holcomb (1997) who reported that new college students do not acknowledge social adjustment as a major concern. Being overly optimistic, the new college student enters the institution unaware



of the affects of (a) separation from family and friends, (b) lack of a support system, and (c) social pressure.

However, this study found one area that is not consistent with Krallman and Holcomb (1997). More than the majority of the participants reported that they would experience social pressure. Nonetheless, it should be noted that 23% of the participants reported they would not experience any social pressure.

The results of the study also indicated that participants expected that their college instructors would get to know them on a personal level. As with academic adjustment, many of the participants expected that personal involvement by the faculty would be the norm. New college students will look to the faculty to serve as mentors and as part of their support system. The reality of faculty interactions, the social pressure of campus life, and the perception of insufficient social support can manifest as feelings of homesickness and questioning of self-worth (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

#### *Research Question 4*

This question sought to identify how gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA affect the expectations that high school seniors have about college. The data collected from each of the categories were correlated against the four variables: (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) geographic region, and (d) GPA to answer this question. The data sets for this question are presented in Tables 8, 9, and 10.

The researcher used *t*-Tests, ANOVA, and Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to compute the correlations between the variables. This researcher found that there was no difference in the expectations of participants as a result of their gender, ethnicity, geographic region, or GPA.

These findings are not consistent with other studies that report a difference between the variables, especially race and gender, as it applies to student success. This researcher expected a correlation between the findings in those studies and this study, even though this study was specifically looking at the expectations high school seniors hold.

Studies such as that of Buchmann, DiPrete, and McDaniel (2007) reported that African American and Hispanic/Latino students have a significantly more difficult transition to college than do Asian American and Caucasian students. Bae, Choy, Geddes, Sable, and Snyder (2000) reported that females are more involved in extracurricular activities than males in high school, with the notable exception of participation on athletic teams. This provides females with a social advantage in college. Buchmann and DiPrete (2006) reported that in the United States, one major reason that women earn more degrees than men is their lower rate of dropout, once enrolled in college. Furthermore, in 2005, it was reported that dropout rates for Whites, Blacks and Hispanic males were 6%, 12%, and 26% respectively, compared to female dropout rates of 5% for Whites, 9% for Blacks, and 18% for Hispanics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

Studies such as these report significant differences in gender and race as they relate to student success at college. However, this study did not find these differences in high school student expectations. This researcher found no other study that looked at how gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA affect the expectations that high school seniors have about college.

## Conclusions

A distinct pattern of high school students' expectations emerged in this study. A pattern of high levels of self-confidence and optimism to succeed in college was evident in their academic, personal, and social expectations. There was no difference in the expectations of participants as a result of their gender, ethnicity, geographic region, or GPA.

The central finding of high levels of self-confidence and optimism is consistent with Stern (1966) who coined the term *freshman myth* to describe the unrealistic and overly optimistic expectations many new college students hold prior to arriving on campus. The freshman myth is often followed by disenchantment when high expectations are not met.

In reflecting on the self-confidence and optimism the participants report, it is apparent to this researcher that the participants have difficulty drawing a distinction between their experience in high school and what they may experience in college. They do not accept the need for a transition from dependant learners to independent learners. This is consistent with Hunter-Hopkins' (2002) comments about millennial students being overprotected, overparented, and less mature than previous generations. They expect that they will be taken care of and someone will look out for them.

The students' expectation that faculty will look out for them, get to know them personally, and teach them study skills may indicate that they are expecting the faculty to serve as *in loco parentis*. As new college students realize that this is not the role faculty serve, they may experience cognitive dissonance. This can lead to increased stress, distress, and potential risky behaviors (Keeling, 2003).

The participants reported that they expect to feel stress and overwhelmed. This is somewhat of a surprise and not congruent with the overall optimism and self-confidence reported in other areas. This researcher questions whether the instrument is an accurate measurement of students' expectations and whether the students answered the questions based on what they thought was the right answer rather than what they truly felt. Using qualitative research methods may provide more insight into this area.

The surprise finding of the research was that there was no difference in expectations that high school seniors had about college based on their gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and GPA. These results might be different, and the researcher suspects they would be, if the sample population had been larger and more diverse. Because the population was made up of students interested in a private university with high admissions standards, homogeneity might exist because students could all be considered high achievers. The reported GPA of the participants was  $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .42$ . Results might be different had this study used a sample with a broader GPA range.

Dweck (2008) reported that many high achievers assume that possessing superior intelligence or ability—along with confidence—is a recipe for success. In fact, however, Dweck suggested that an overemphasis on intellect leaves people vulnerable to failure because they are fearful of acknowledging their shortcomings. This suggests that the participants might not be willing to acknowledge doubt or fears they may have about the transition to college because they would be viewed as failures.

### Implications

The ideas and perceptions about college held by potential students are often more romanticized notions than accurate reflections of college life. This leaves many new

students struggling to adjust to their new environment (Keup, 2007). As a result, 34% will drop out in the first year (American College Testing Program, 2008).

The topic of expectations that new students have about college is discussed in many scholarly articles, but there is little evidence of programs or initiatives being instituted to help incoming freshman set realistic expectations about college. This study sought to provide insight into the expectations that high school seniors have about college. This researcher found no empirical data about the expectations that high school seniors have about college

The findings of this study support the concept of the freshman myth. High school seniors reported unrealistic and overly optimistic expectations about the academic, personal, and social experiences they will encounter as freshman.

One of the difficulties in adjusting to college is the incongruence between students' unrealistic expectations before starting college and their actual experience after they have begun their college careers. Student expectations are rarely realized; their experiences in the first weeks and months of university life are usually much more stressful and challenging than they anticipated.

This study demonstrates that high school students expect to enter college as dependent learners instead of independent learners. They expect to depend on faculty for learning assistance, that college will be a repeat of high school, and that they will not have trouble doing well in class. This study further puts parents of students and higher education officials on notice that high school seniors expect to experience a lot of peer pressure and stress at college. This merits further attention as peer pressure and stress, if not handled appropriately, can lead to destructive behavior by students.

The finding supports the need to start college transition programs while students are still in high school. Upcraft et al. (2005) stated that if institutions are to challenge and support first-year students in their academic success, they must focus on both the characteristics and experiences of their students prior to college.

#### Recommendations for Professional Practice

First, the information gleaned from this study can provide support for new transition programs that address the expectations new college students have about college. In turn, these new transition programs could help adjust unrealistic expectations and eliminate much of the incongruence that would otherwise be experienced. This could lead to higher persistence rates and student success.

Upcraft et al. (2005) suggested institutions focus on expectations of students before they enter college." Understanding the emotional, social, and academic expectations of new college students plays a vital role in new-student success (Krallman & Holcomb, 1997).

Second, it is recommended that these finding be shared with high school seniors who plan to attend college. The information should also be shared with the students' parents. By opening a dialogue around these finding, institutions and families can work together to adjust expectations that might otherwise leave the new college student unprepared for what they might experience once they arrive on campus. Through discussion, students may gain self-efficacy about the challenges that lay before them.

Third, college admissions teams should review this study and incorporate the finding into their recruitment practices. It is the responsibility of the admissions team to help educate both high school students and parents on the particulars of the college and

college experience. Part of the admissions process must always be educating the potential student and helping them identify their interests and needs and their expectations of college. It is in the best interest of the student and institution that there is a good fit for both parties. This cannot be accomplished if students have false impressions and expectations of the college and or college life.

Lastly, high schools must focus attention on helping student learn to deal with issues such as stress. Under the current new college student transition structure, freshman persistence levels continue to drop, and recent trends suggest incoming freshman are experiencing higher levels of stress and distress (Boulter, 2002). This study reports that more than 80% of the participants expect to experience high levels of stress.

The high dropout rate and increased stress levels of incoming freshman dictate the need for change in how high schools support college-transition programs. It should be the duty of every high school to teach students coping skills for dealing with such things as stress and peer pressure. Doing this while the student is still in high school and surrounded by a familiar support system and social structure may be more beneficial than waiting until the student is at college and experiencing distress. Programs such as these can augment the current new college-student-transition structure to help prepare new college students for college life before they arrive on campus.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This study was limited by the selection of the sample, thus limiting the generalizability of the study. The results of this study apply to a particular group of students who applied to a private institution in southern California. Further research is suggested using a larger, more diverse population.

Further research is suggested, using an instrument that has greater reliability. Although this study provides new insight into high school students' expectations, it is unknown if the results could be repeated.

Further research is warranted using a qualitative instrument. It would be useful to learn why some of the participants answered the survey as they did, and the findings could validate the quantitative results. This would be likely to add value to the results of this study and the body of empirical studies on new college-student transition.

#### Concluding Thought

This study supports Tinto (1975), who theorized that students enter college with particular pre-entry characteristics and skills that affect their initial adjustment and success. Some of these include overconfidence about the ability to deal with the emotional, social, and academic challenges they may face. Both overconfidence and unrealistic expectations affect initial adjustment and success. If preestablished expectations are addressed before their initial experience at college, the student may be more successful at integrating into the new environment (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Tinto (1993) stated that the success of new-student transition depends in part on the degree to which individuals have already begun the process of separation and transition prior to "formal entry." Tinto theorized that a "rite of passage" into the higher education arena needs to start prior to the actual experience. By participating in such a program, the student can learn to navigate through the higher education system and acclimate to the new environmental setting quicker. Setting realistic expectations is a major component of this process.



Although this study has limitations, the results are congruent with other empirical research that supports the need for high schools and colleges to work together to help set realistic expectations that high school seniors have about college. It is our duty as educators to help our students succeed. By not helping high school students set appropriate academic, personal, and social expectations about college, it is this researcher's opinion that we are not doing our jobs. We are playing a significant role in setting up our students for failure once they enter college. This should serve as a call for all professionals in academia to focus not only on test scores and GPA's, but also the personal development of our students.

## REFERENCES

- American College Testing Program. (2008). *Research and policy issues*. Retrieved September 2, 2008, from <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/retain.html>
- Atherton, J. S. (2005). *Learning and teaching: Cognitive dissonance and learning*. Retrieved January 6, 2009, from <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/dissonance.htm>
- Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bae, Y., Choy, S., Geddes, C., Sable, J., & Snyder, T. (2000). *Trends in educational equity of girls and women*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Baker, R. W., & Siryk, B. (1989). *Student adaptation to college questionnaire manual*. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.
- Bandura, A. (1994). *Self efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Bean, J., & Eaton, S. B. (2001). The psychology underlying successful retention practices. *College Student Retention*, 3, 73–89.
- Bigger, J. J. (2005). *Improving the odds for freshman success*. Retrieved December 11, 2008, from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/First-Year.htm>
- Blanc, R. A., Behur, L., & Martin, D. C. (1983). Breaking the attrition cycle: The effects of supplemental instruction on undergraduate performance and attrition. *Journal of Higher Education*, 54, 80–89.
- Boulter, L. T. (2002). Self-concept as a predictor of college freshman academic adjustment. *College Student Journal*, 36, 234–245.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Buchmann, C., & DiPrete, T. A. (2006). The growing female advantage in college completion: The role of family background and academic achievement. *American Sociological Review*, 71, 515–541.
- Buchmann, DiPrete, & McDaniel, (2007). Gender inequalities in education. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 319–37.

- Burke, P. J., & Reitzes, D. C. (1991). An identity approach to commitment. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 54, 239–251.
- Carlson, S. (2005). *The net generation goes to college*. Retrieved December 4, 2008, from <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i07/07a03401.htm>
- California Department of Education. (2008). *California counselor to student ratio*. Retrieved November 11, 2008, from <http://data1.cde.ca.gov>
- Carter, C. (2009). Top 10 reason students struggle and drop out freshman year—And what you can do about it. *Recruitment & Higher Education*. Retrieved June 27, 2009, from <http://www.magnapubs.com>
- Cohen, R. D., & Joby, R., (1978). *Freshman seminar: A new orientation*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Columbus State University. (2006). *Computer information and networking services: Glossary*. Retrieved April 12, 2006, from <http://cins.colstate.edu/glossary.htm>
- Compas, B. E., Wagner, B. M., Slavin, L. A., & Vannatta, K. (1986). A prospective study of life events, social support, and psychological symptomology during the transition from high school to college. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 241–257.
- Corey, G. (2004). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning.
- Crissman, J. L. (2004). Tracing friendsickness during the first year of college through journal writing: A qualitative study. *NASPA Journal*, 41, 518–537.
- deVaus, D. (2002). *Analyzing social science data. 50 key problems in data analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Dingfelder, S. (2004). Learning how to learn. *Monitor on Psychology*, 35(4), 32.
- Drake, R. (1966). *Review of the literature for freshman orientation practices in the United States*. Fort Collins: Colorado State University.
- Dweck, C. (2008) The secret to raising smart kids. *Scientific American Mind* 12, 1–8.
- Expedite. (2006). *Expedite website design: Web page*. Retrieved April 8, 2006, from [http://www.expedite-website-design.com/term\\_definition.htm](http://www.expedite-website-design.com/term_definition.htm)
- Faculty Resource Network at New York University. (2009). *Overview: Today's college students*. Retrieved April 5, 2009, from <http://www.nyu.edu/frn/events-symposium.nyu>

- Felker, K. (1984). Grow: An experience for college freshman. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 51*, 558–561.
- Fink, A. (2006). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fisher, S., & Hood, B. (1987). The stress of the transition to university: A longitudinal study of psychological disturbance, absent-mindedness and vulnerability to homesickness. *British Journal of Psychology, 78*, 425–441.
- Frank, M. J. (1997). Adjusting to change needn't be difficult: Do it in stages. *University Record, 6*(11), 1.
- Gerdes, H., & Mallinckrodt, B. (1994). Emotional, social, and academic adjustment of college students: A longitudinal study of retention. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 72*, 281–288.
- Gershaw, D. A. (1989). *Locus of control*. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from [http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/Locus\\_of\\_control](http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/Locus_of_control)
- Gibbons, M., & Shoffner, M. (2004). Prospective first-generation college students: Meeting their needs through social cognitive career theory. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 91–115.
- Godfrey, P. (2003). *Effects of cultural capital on role identity acquisition and college students' academic outcome: A comparison of traditional and first generational students* (Unpublished master's thesis). Portland State University, Portland, OR.
- Gore, P., Leuwerke, W., & Turley, S. (2006). A psychometric study of the college self-efficacy inventory. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*, 227–244.
- H&H Publishing. (2008). *Overview of PEEK*. Retrieved November 15, 2008, from [http://www.hhpublishing.com/\\_assessments/PEEK/index.html](http://www.hhpublishing.com/_assessments/PEEK/index.html)
- Hawley, T., & Harris, Y. (2005). Student characteristics related to persistence for first-year community college students. *College Student Retention, 7*, 117–142.
- Helland, P., Stallings, H., & Braxton, J. (2002). The fulfillment of expectations for college and student departure decisions. *Journal of College Student Retention 3*, 381–396.
- Henton, J., Lamke, L., Murphy, C., & Haynes, L. (1980). Crisis reactions of college freshman as a function of family support systems. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 58*, 508–511.
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Hunter-Hopkins, C. (2002). *Self-assured, stressed and straight: Millennial students and how they got that way*. Retrieved January 10, 2007, from <http://www.itc.virginia.edu/virginia.edu/fall02/student/home.html>
- Inman, W., & Mayers, L. (1999). The importance of bring first: Unique characteristics of first generation college bound students. *Community College Review*, 26, 3–24.
- Isheler, J. L. (2004). Tracing “friendsickness” during the first year of college through journal writing: A qualitative study. *NASPA Journal*, 41, 518–537.
- Jackson, L. M., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W., & Hunsberger, B. E. (2000). Great expectations. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 2100–2125.
- Keeling, S. (2003). Advising the millennial generation. *NACADA Journal*, 23(1&2), 30–36.
- Keup, J. R. (2007). Great expectation and the ultimate reality check. *NASPA Journal*, 44, 3–31.
- Kiernan, V. (2005). *Students desire a balance of technological and human contact, surveys suggest*. Retrieved April 12, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i14/14a04102.htm>
- Knight, H. (2005). *Cell phones a high priority, even among poor teens*. Retrieved April 9, 2006, from <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/02/27/BAGG2BCJTI66.DTL>
- Krallman, D., & Holcomb, T. (1997, June). *First-year student expectations: Pre- and post-orientation*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Institutional Research, Buena Vista, FL.
- Kuh, G. D., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., Andreas, R. E., Lyons, J. W., Strange, C. C., et al. (1991). *Involving colleges: Successful approaches to fostering student learning and personal development outside the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Larose, S., & Boivin, M. (1998). Attachment to parents, social support expectations, and socioemotional adjustment during the high school–college transition. *Journal of Research On Adolescence*, 8, 1–27.
- Lee, R. M., & Robins, S. B. (1995). Measuring belongingness: The social connectedness and anxiety, self-esteem, and social identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45, 338–345.
- Levine, M. (2005). *Ready or not here life comes*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- McCarthy, M., & Kuh, G. (2006). Are students ready for college? What student engagement data says. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87, 664–669.

- Milem, J. F. (1997). A model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between Astin's theory of involvement and Tinto's theory of student departure. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*, 387–400.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *Digest of educational statistics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Oblinger, D. (2005). *Who is the millennial student and what can faculty members do to improve learning*. Retrieved April 5, 2006, from <http://www.uoit.ca/teachingandlearning/contact/nov05/nov05.html>Paul
- Orcher, L. T. (2007). *Conducting a survey. Techniques for a term project*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak.
- Pancer, M. S., Hunsberger, B., Pratt, M. W., & Alisat, S. (2000). Cognitive complexity of expectation and adjustment to university in the first year. *Journal of Adolescent Research 15*, 38–57.
- Pappas, J. P., & Loving, R. K. (1985). Returning learner. In L. Noel, R. Levitz, & D. Saluri (Eds.), *Increasing student retention: Effective programs and practices for reducing the dropout rate* (pp. 138–161). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Patten, M.L. (2005). *Understanding research methods: An overview of the essentials* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczk Publishing.
- Pascarella, E., Edison, M., Hagedorn, L., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. (1996). Influences on students' internal locus of attribution for academic success in the first year of college. *Research in Higher Education, 37*, 731–756.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Paul, E. L., & Brier, S. (2001). Friendsickness in the transition to college: Precollege predictors and college adjustment correlates. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 79*, 77–89.
- Paul, E. L., & Kelleher, M. (1995). Precollege concerns about losing and making friends in college: Implications for friendship satisfaction and self-esteem during college transition. *Journal of College Student Development, 36*, 513–521.
- Paul, E. L., Poole, A., & Jakubowic, N. (1998). Intimacy development and romantic status: Implications for adjustment to the college transition. *Journal of College Student Development, 39*, 75–86.
- Peterson's. (2009). *How colleges look at your GPA scale*. Retrieved July 17, 2009, from <http://www.petersons.com/common/article.asp?id=2918&path=ug.gs.advice&spnsor>

- Phalen, K. (2002). *Self-assured, stresses and straight: Millennial students and how they got that way*. Retrieved April 12, 2006, from <http://www.itc.virginia.edu/virginia.edu/fall02/student/home.html>
- Ratcliff, J. L. (1991). Dropout prevention and at-risk college students. In L. L. West (Ed.), *Effective strategies for dropout prevention of at-risk youth* (pp. 251–282). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.
- Read, B. (2005). *Lectures on the go*. Retrieved November 12, 2008, from <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i10/10a03901.htm>
- Rich, A. R., & Scovel, M. (1987). Causes of depression in college students: A cross lagged panel correlation analysis. *Psychological Reports, 60*, 27–30.
- Robinson, A., & Udall, M. (2003, January 6–7). *Developing the independent learner: The Mexican Hat approach*. Paper presented at the 3rd IEEE International Symposium on Engineering Education, Southampton, UK.
- Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized expectations for the internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied, 80*, 1–28.
- Schmidts, P. (2006). Schools & Colleges. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 10*(b), 1.
- Searchwebservices.com. (2006). *Web services definitions: Chat rooms*. Retrieved April 13, 2006, from <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d99/d99t148.asp>
- Seidman, A. (2005). Defining retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 6*(2), 129–136.
- Stern, G. G. (1966). Myth and reality in the American college. *American Association of University Professors Bulletin, 52*, 408–414.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Education Research, 45*, 89–125.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition research* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Upcraft, M. L., & Gardner, J. N. (1989). *The freshman year experience*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Upcraft, M. L., Gardner, J. N., & Barefoot, B. O. (Eds.). (2005). *Challenging & supporting the first year-student*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Urani, M. A., Miller, S. A., Johnson, J. E., & Petzel, T. P. (2003). Homesickness in socially anxious first year college students. *College Student Journal, 37*(3), 392–398.

- USA Study Guide. (2009). *Life in the USA: US regions and US states*. Retrieved July 15, 2009, from <http://www.usastudyguide.com/regionaldifferences.htm>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2008). *Newsroom*. Retrieved September 6, 2008, from [http://www.census.gov/PressRelease/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/012084.html](http://www.census.gov/PressRelease/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/012084.html)
- USRobotics. (2006). *Analog and ISDN glossary of terms*. Retrieved December 12, 2006, from <http://www.usr.com/education/analogglossary.asp#i>
- Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weinstein, C., Palmer, D., & Hanson, G. (1995). *PEEK users's manual*. Clearwater, FL: H&H.
- Wessell, T. R., Engle, K., & Smidchens, V. (1978). Reducing attrition on the college campus. *NASPA Journal*, 16(2), 26–32.
- Wikipedia. (2009a). *Blog*. Retrieved September 19, 2009, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>
- Wikipedia. (2009b). *Facebook*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>
- Wikipedia. (2009c). *Instant messaging*. Retrieved December 7, 2008, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)
- Wikipedia. (2009d) *iPod*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/iPod>
- Wikipedia. (2009e) *MPEG videos*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MPEG\\_video](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MPEG_video)
- Wikipedia. (2009f). *Twitter*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>
- Wikipedia. (2009g). *Webcams*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_cams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_cams)
- Wittmer, J. (2000). *Managing your school counseling program: K–12 developmental strategies* (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Education Media Corporation.
- Woosley, S.A. (2003). How important are the first few weeks of college? The long term effects of initial college experiences. *College Student Journal*, 37, 201–207.



## APPENDIXES



## Appendix B: Reliability Email

From: Mike Ealy <[hhservice@hhpublishing.com](mailto:hhservice@hhpublishing.com)>

Date: Fri, 22 Aug 2008 14:31:21 -0400

To: Brian Harke <[brianharke@comcast.net](mailto:brianharke@comcast.net)>

Subject: PEEK

The PEEK User's Manual discusses the development of the instrument. Since the PEEK assesses expectations, and expectations vary from institution to institution, reliability and validity studies were not done on the instrument. That being said, the data gleaned from administering PEEK can be quite useful to learn the social, personal, and academic expectations of your institution.

Here is a brief article that touches on the question you're asking.

-----

Authored by a team headed by Claire E. Weinstein, PEEK explores expectations and beliefs about college experiences. This 30-item inventory uses a self-report format and is easy to administer and score.

Expectations and belief systems frequently over-ride information or knowledge and can greatly influence success or failure. For example, students who believe mathematics is best learned by rote memorization, often ignore the fact that their professor emphasizes understanding. As another example, students who believe college is an environment for learning specific job skills may not properly attend to courses not directly related to job training.

Each PEEK statement is written from a student's perspective, but faculty, staff, and administrators can also take PEEK to assess their own beliefs about student perceptions and expectations. "From our extensive use of LASSI, we predict that each individual taking the PEEK will immediately benefit merely by the process of clarifying expectations," states Bob Hackworth, H&H President.

Unlike most inventories, there are no national norms or "correct" responses. PEEK scores will be unique to each institution or peer group within that institution. Each individual within a peer group will have a score that indicates the extent to which his/her expectations differ/agree with the peer group. Professional interventions can be planned for individuals whose expectations vary considerably from their peer group. When peer group scores vary considerably from institutional perceptions and expectations, PEEK can be used to help initiate actions to narrow the gaps.

PEEK is designed to identify differences within and between peer groups which may be valuable clues to developing programs to change inaccurate perceptions and expectations. For example, comparing the responses of first and second-year students may help to identify reasons for student success or failure. Comparing the responses of the faculty in an area to the responses of incoming and advanced students may help to identify mismatched expectations within or between each of the groups.

The uses of PEEK are expected to provide each institution a valuable source of information for adjusting and/or improving admissions, orientations,

instruction, faculty development, counseling, and administration.

-----

Mike Ealy

H&H Publishing Company, Inc.

1231 Kapp Drive

Clearwater, FL 33765

(800) 366-4079

<http://www.hhpublishing.com/>

## Appendix C: Participation Request E-mail Sent

Dear Student:

My name is Brian Harke and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. I am emailing you to ask for your help in completing my doctoral dissertation research.

I am doing my dissertation research on student transition from high school to college. You are being asked to participate in this research study because you will soon be graduating high school and going to college. If you agree to help me, you will be asked to complete a quick, 30-question online survey. The survey asks about your academic, personal and social expectations of college.

To participate in the study, you will need to complete the survey within the seven days. You will be asked to put your name on the survey, however it will remain anonymous. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. It is for my tracking use only. The survey asks for an ID number. You should leave this field blank.

I hope you will take the time to help me out. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Brian Harke

Doctoral Candidate, University of San Francisco

**To start the survey please click on the URL below:**

<http://www.hhpublishing.com/peek/>

You will be asked for the following information to log on to the survey:

**School Number: 2300**

**User Name: edpy**

**User Password: gbx8s**

It is possible that some of the questions may make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may also stop participation at any time. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Any information submitted on the survey, and your participation will be kept as confidential as possible. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Records will be kept as confidential as is possible. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files. Individual results will not be shared with any person, college or organization. There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in this study. If you have questions about the study, you may contact me at [brharke@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:brharke@dons.usfca.edu).

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

## Appendix D: Participation Request Reminder Email

Dear Mr. Doe:

My name is Brian Harke and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. Last week I sent you an email regarding a study I am doing on student transition from high school to college. I am interested in learning about the academic, personal and social expectations that high school seniors have about college.

You were asked to participate in this research study because you have recently expressed interest in attending a large private university in southern California. I obtained your contact information from the university.

I noticed that you have not completed the survey yet. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a 30 question online survey. The survey asks about your academic, personal and social expectations of college. To participate in the study, you will need to complete the survey within the next 3 days. Please click on the link below to begin the survey [www.xxxxx.com](http://www.xxxxx.com).

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Brian Harke

Doctoral Student

University of San Francisco



## Appendix E: IRBPHS Approval For Human Subject Use In Research

March 9, 2009

Dear Mr. Harke:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #09-013).

Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research

----- End of Forwarded Message