

Examining the Effectiveness of the Early Advantage Program at Chaffey Community College

Jacquelyn Andersen, Lindsay Donahue, Heather Gross & Julie Law

Azusa Pacific University

April 2, 2013

### **Abstract**

Theories and strategies to combat student retention vary greatly by institution. One strategy used to assist with the retention of at-risk students is an Early Advantage program. This study examined the effectiveness of the Early Advantage program and the predictors of the Early Advantage student. Using a locally designed instrument, 180 students at a local community college were surveyed and 17 students were interviewed. Findings related to parental involvement were the most promising. Students who had clear career goals were more likely to have positive relationships with their parents and were more likely to confide in their parents about their personal relationships. The research also found that students who relied on parents' finances to fund their education were more likely to have open relationships with their parents and were more likely to take the responsibility of meeting with an advisor. Another important finding was the telephone calls that the Early Advantage program utilizes most heavily did not increase the likelihood that the students would visit a tutor or attend a workshop.

## **Introduction**

Record numbers of students flock to college campuses each fall with high hopes of obtaining the new prerequisite for a middle class life: a college degree. The harsh reality is that little more than half of those bright-eyed college freshmen will actually complete their degree. The gap between access and completion has put a new focus on increasing retention strategies (the percentage of freshman who return to the same institution for a second year of college). That is a huge task for institutions and student affairs professionals alike. There are multiple reasons students drop out, from money to academics, a lack of a sense of belonging to the institution or a general feeling of missing direction in life. To combat this, colleges are scrambling to create initiatives to boost college completion rates.

## **Literature Review**

There is a plethora of literature on reducing the attrition rates on university campuses. Retention is important for a variety of reasons. The retention of students is necessary for financial stability of the institution and to subsequently fund academic programs. As student affairs professionals, we want our students to have a positive college experience, complete their academic goals, and become productive members of the workforce. In a comprehensive review of the available literature on student retention, this literature review aims to introduce three emergent themes. The themes are: targeting the nontraditional predictors of increased retention, focusing on individualized support and finally retention strategies that have been used successfully by various institutions.

### *Predictors of Increased Retention*

Historically, the traditional predictors of student success in college have been ACT/SAT scores and high school GPA. Although these yield modest prediction results on a consistent

basis, research has shown that they do not paint the whole picture. Scholars are now calling for more of a focus on nontraditional predictors of college performance. Students who have educational and future career goals tend to persist longer than those who do not. Students need to have a level of commitment to a career, academic goals, and graduation in order to increase success. When students enter college they face new relationships, adjusting their existing relationships, learning to study at the college level, and dealing with independence. Students who can make this transition are more involved on campus and with the faculty and staff who work on campus. Three important nonacademic predictors for retention are emotional intelligence, living on campus, and receiving financial aid.

Success in college may be related to other variables such as a student's emotional intelligence and the student's ability to persist and graduate. Areas of emotional intelligence that are significant are empathy, social responsibility, flexibility, and impulse control. It was also noted that students with unrealistic expectations of themselves or familial expectations tended to have higher dropout rates than those with realistic educational ambitions (Sparkman, Maulding & Roberts, 2012).

Using multi-institutional data, Oseguera & Rhee (2009) found that living on campus rather than off campus increases the probability of persistence by 4.5%. Living on campus tends to boost the interactions with peers and faculty alike. The environment of living on-campus affords students more time to interact with other on-campus peers and allows them to develop avenues of social support that they can count on. This social support aids in increasing a student's sense of belonging to the university.

Receiving financial aid is also a predictor of student retention because prior research has shown that students with greater financial need persist to graduation at lower rates. Community

college students claim that financial difficulties are a key reason for their decision to drop-out. Financial support, has been shown to affect access to and continuation in higher education (Baker, 2010). Student Support Services is a TRIO (students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including students from first-generation and low-income backgrounds and those with physical or learning disabilities) program encourages student retention. It requires program members to meet regularly with their advisors, complete mid-semester grade checks, and complete a long-term plan of study (Fike & Fike, 2008).

### *Individualized Support*

Social adjustment is a major predictor for student retention. Social adjustment precedes a students' willingness to become involved on campus. If a student doesn't feel connected to the university/college the student has a higher chance of attrition. The best way for a student to feel connected and engaged, especially at the community college, is in the classroom. Faculty's focus needs to be the student's involvement in the classroom. Consistent contact with faculty helps students feel like welcome members of the institution. The available literature points to the need for invasive counseling techniques such as faculty texting students with reminders of upcoming tests, assigned faculty mentors that are also versed in scholarship applications and financial-aid training as well as trained coaches that will reach out to students by text, phone, or in person at least once a week and are on call 24/7 to keep them on track (Adams, 2011). A mentoring relationship, or non-kin adult support figure, can foster the psychosocial and educational adjustment of young men and women. Mentoring is an increasingly popular intervention with youth, including both gifted and at-risk populations (Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002).

*Commonly Used Strategies*

The process of coping with college stressors has been another avenue of study with concern towards retention. A few studies found that small groups to be particularly effective for accomplishing goals of academic stress prevention. Many researchers have delved into the process of coping and the techniques used to combat the pressures of school and life. The Freshman Empowerment Program is an example of a group process that was studied to determine the support small groups can provide. The process group was studied throughout the year and compiled at the end of the program. It was believed that participation in these groups would positively affect GPA. The groups served as the basis for resources and coping techniques. Members were introduced to campus activities and assistance as well as counseling and tutoring services. The results indicated that the cumulative GPA of group members was significantly higher than the average student (Folger, Carter, & Chase, 2004). As some studies found that social or support groups to be effective, on the other hand, study groups were not helpful. According to Baker (2011), despite strong evidence found in the literature favoring study groups and peer mentoring, these strategies were not very effective on retention.

The faculty component appears to be the crucial piece in the retention of struggling students. Through faculty's endorsement and participation in programing, many retention strategies can succeed. A retention program that many schools are using that relies on faculty participation is an Early Alert/Advantage system. This type of system asks faculty to flag students who appear to be struggling academically or personally. Student affairs professionals will then contact the student and set them up for a (depending on the institution) mandatory meeting. During this meeting the student is connected to any and all resources on campus to assist them. These resources can be academic, such as tutoring or study groups, or if non-

academic problems then they can be referred to the Counseling Center, Health Center or even Career Services. The idea is that if a student is struggling, the institution wants counselors to work with faculty to get the student help. The heart and soul of any Early Alert/ Advantage program is that it is individualized help with the transitions of college. According to Adams (2011), “The idea that a student is going to march over to the Office of Retention and self-identify is not likely” (p. 23).

### *Summary of Findings*

College-student retention is arguably the most intensely studied issue in academe. Although the body of retention literature grows ever larger, there is substantial missing documentation regarding effectively used strategies. And while no magic bullet exists to address the most pressing retention issues, colleges and universities continue to look for new methods to address the student attrition problem. Each institution is left to “fend for themselves” if you will, in terms of finding programming that is effective on their campus. According to Siegal (2011), “An institution may find that a generic, prepackaged retention program or model “pulled from the shelf” may not be entirely suitable” (p. 10). In short, retention plans must be tailored to a campus’s needs, based on proven research, involve a wide range of campus departments, and be planned with students’ interests in mind (Siegel, 2011). When students fail to graduate, they lose out on tuition money and time spent pursuing a degree. Oftentimes, the student loan debt will set them back years. A student’s non-completion also results in the losing of potential earning power that comes with a college degree. There is an urgent need for commitment and collaboration between academic affairs and student services, including clear role delineation and expectations, in order to tackle the retention issue. On campus, this translates to reasonable efforts to push for small policy changes to increase the likelihood that our students will succeed. These policy

changes will demand budget discussions. Budget discussions inevitably turn to whether a current program is producing outcomes that warrant a continuation of the current budget, or an increase or decrease. According to Hossler (2005), most colleges and universities “do not conduct studies of the efficacies of retention intervention programs” (p. 7). Interventions need to be tailored to the specific institution and evaluated to determine efficacy. This study aims to test the effectiveness of the Early Advantage Program at Chaffey Community College.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The participants in the study were participants of the Early Advantage Program at Chaffey College. All of these students were in a class assigned to the Early Advantage Program. The professors of these classes volunteered to participate in the Early Advantage Program. Our limitations of the sample were not every Early Advantage student was surveyed and we only surveyed Chaffey Community College Early Advantage students. Our strengths of the sample are 100% response rate from students in the classrooms the researchers surveyed and our sample is only students in the Early Advantage Program.

There were 180 participants who completed the survey that were a part of the Early Advantage Program at Chaffey Community College. The study had 84 males and 96 females. The ethnicity of participants was varied with 6% African American, 6% Asian American, 23% Caucasian/White, 39% Latino/Hispanic, 16% Multi-Ethnic, and 10% unknown/blank. The mean age of participants was 22. The mean year in college was 2<sup>nd</sup>. The mean GPA was 2.92 of participants with a range of 1.00 to 4.10. Only 14 of the 180 participants had received an Early Advantage phone call meaning their academic performance was poor and were connected with

resources to assist them. The survey received a 100% response rate. We conducted the surveys in classrooms where faculty induced the students to take the survey as part of class time.

There were 17 students interviewed from the Early Advantage Program. The interview had 8 males and 9 females. The ethnicity of the interviewees was 23% Caucasian/White, 59% Latino/Hispanic, 12% Multi-Ethnic, and 6% unknown/blank. The mean age of participants was 27. The mean year in school was 2. The average GPA was 3.03. The interview received a 100% response rate. The interviewees were students who completed the survey and indicated that they would be willing to participate in an interview.

### *Materials*

This study used surveys and personal interviews to collect data. The survey was composed of a locally designed survey. The survey included all students in the Early Advantage Program. The survey was developed from the literature and the mission of the Early Advantage Program. The survey was distributed to students currently enrolled in an Early Advantage Program class where the professor gave permission for using class time to complete the survey. There was no incentive for the students to complete the survey other than it was during their class time.

The interview was composed of locally designed questions and was conducted with students who were currently in the Early Advantage Program. The interview questions were developed from the literature and the mission of the Early Advantage Program, an in-depth continuation of the survey, and the mission of the Early Advantage Program. Students who took the survey had the option to volunteer for an interview by including their email. Students were then contacted via email to get contact information to conduct a phone interview. Once contact

information was received, researchers called the students to conduct the interview. Some students were contacted via email to conduct an online interview.

The variables for this study were academic performance, resource use, career goal, parent relationship, relationship and involvement with faculty, staff interaction, and sense of community at Chaffey Community College. Academic performance is based on GPA, remedial courses, and struggles in college level math, reading, and/or writing. There were five questions about the academic performance of students that consisted of struggles in college courses, GPA, and remedial courses. The researchers chose resource use because the mission of Learning Assistance Programs according the CAS standards is they must provide students with resources and opportunities to improve their ability to learn and achieve success. Resource use was measured by how often a student used resources on campus. The researchers chose resource use as a variable because the Early Alert Program connects the students with resources on campus to assist them, whether that is tutoring, attending workshops at the success center, and supplemental instruction meetings (SI). Four questions were used to measure resource use. Career goal is measured by five questions ranging from questions about their career goals and their future goals. To meet the mission of Counseling Services of the CAS standards there must be able to assist a student defining and accomplishing personal, academic, and career goals. Three questions were open-ended, one was scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, and one was on a scale of very clear to very unclear. Parent relationship was chosen to measure how close the student was the parent. The research shows that having a parent who is involved in your academics and/or personal life affects your academic performance. Parent relationship is measured by level of encouragement in college, how informed a parent is of their student's relationships, problems, and everyday experiences, whether the student lives with their parents,

and overall relationship with parents. Seven questions help to determine parent relationship with two open-ended questions and five questions on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Relationship and involvement with faculty is measured by number of times a student met with a professor during office hours. The researchers chose to measure the student's relationship and involvement with faculty because Astin's theory of involvement states that when a student is more involved on campus the more likely they are to stay in college. There is one question for this variable and that is the amount of times a student has visited their professor during office hours. The last variable staff interaction is measured by the number of meetings with an advisor/academic counselor. Staff interaction poses the same theory of involvement as relationship and involvement with faculty. For Learning Assistance Programs facilities and equipment must be available for students to feel safe to have private conversations and meeting with advisors/counselors can create this space. Sense of community at Chaffey Community College is measured by interview questions asking students how they feel about attending Chaffey Community College and if the student feels they are part of the Chaffey Community College community.

### *Procedure*

Students were instructed that this survey was voluntary to complete and that they had twenty minutes to complete the survey. Students were in a classroom at Chaffey Community College and were in an Early Advantage Program designed class. Only a pencil was required to complete this survey. Students were instructed to answer all questions to the best of their knowledge and could stop the survey at any time.

Students who participated in the interviews were instructed that this was voluntary and they were allowed to stop the study at any time. Students were instructed to answer all questions to the best of their abilities and that confidentiality would be maintained.

A mixed-methods study was utilized using survey and interviews. The dependent variable of this study was the Early Advantage student, whether they received a phone call or not. The independent variables were age, gender, year in school, ethnicity, financial aid, academic performance, resource use, career goal, parent relationship, relationship and involvement with faculty, and staff interaction. All of the independent variables were run against the dependent variable. A t-test was run comparing academic performance, resource use, and career goals to early alert student. A correlation analysis was run to determine the relationship between parent relationships, relationship and involvement with faculty, staff interaction, career goal, age, gender, and ethnicity. Means were assessed for age and year in school. A multiple regression was run to find predictors of relationship and involvement with faculty, staff interaction, career goal, parent relationship, and academic performance. These characteristics were measured against were age, gender, ethnicity, GPA, students who received a phone call or not, struggles in college math, reading, and writing, year in school, and parent involvement.

The qualitative analysis tests that were utilized were document review and interviews. The dependent variable and independent variables are the same as the quantitative study. A document review was conducted to measure Early Advantage students, if a counselor has contacted them, and to check student's GPA. According to CAS for Learning Assistance Programs, the program and technology must allow staff to have access to institutional databases and record keeping and a document review proved that this is being met. Interviews were conducted to learn more about sense of community students felt at Chaffey Community College,

career goals, parent relationship, resource use, and academic performance for the Early Advantage student.

## **Results**

### *Quantitative Results*

Six classes at Chaffey Community College were surveyed while collecting 180 surveys and a 100 percent response rate. There was limited significance in the demographics of the individuals who responded to the survey. In the responses, 53.3% indicated as female (96 individuals) while 46.7 indicated as male (84 individuals). In regards to race/ethnicity, it appeared to have a stronger difference. Forty-two individuals identified as white (23.3%), seventy individuals identifies as Latin/Hispanic (38.9%), eleven identified as African-American (6.1%), another eleven identified as Asian (6.1%), twenty-nine identified as Multi-Ethnic (16.1%) and lastly fourteen identified as unknown (7.8%). The significant difference was from the individuals who received a phone call and those who didn't receive a phone call from the Early Advantage team at Chaffey College. The difference stood at 166 responses that didn't receive a phone call (92.3%) and fourteen responses who did receive a phone call from a staff member in Early Advantage, (7.7%).

By running a correlation between the key variables and predictors of the research found during the literature review we were able to find significant results. There was a positive correlation between each of the parent questions in regards towards the student. Parents Encouragement, Parents Paying for School, Where students see their parents daily and student/parent relationships all had a strong correlation with each other. However, it was the correlation between the student/parent relationship and parent encouragement that had the

strongest correlation, ( $r=.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Another significant correlation that was found in the responses regarding students and their parents was where or not the student visited a professor during the semester. It appears that there was a negative correlation between a parents encouragement with the student and if the student went to meet with a professor, ( $r=-.30$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Also, looking at if a student was meeting with a professor during the semester, there appears to be a positive correlation with the students meeting with an Academic Advisor in the same period of time, ( $r=.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Taking a look at the various correlations with the students age, there appears to be two significant correlations; parents encouragement ( $r=.43$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and parents paying for college, ( $r=.30$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Race and ethnicity also played out into significant correlations with the student responses. The most significant correlations when looking at race and ethnicity was actually Parents Encouragement ( $r=.31$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and the Student/Parent Relationship ( $r=.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Lastly, when looking at Career Plans the most significant correlation was actually the Parent/Student relationship which had a negative correlation ( $r=-.31$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Next, various multiple regression scenarios were ran. The first test ran was looking at the responses from question 1 and their Academic Classes as the dependent variables. The independent variables were 1) race/ethnicity, age, year in school and gender, 2) college math, college English and college reading, 3) GPA and if students received a phone call from Early Advantage. Model one had an 8.9% variance change ( $R^2=.089$ , while model two had 11.6% and model three had 17.4%. Overall, variance in Academic Classes was ( $F(9,123)= 2.88$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Next, a Multiple Regression on question two – Students Academic Effort was run as the dependent variable while the same independent variables were kept. In this test, similar rates of change occurred; Model one had 9.9%, Models two had 15.2% while Model three had 15.8%.

Overall, variance in Student Academic Effort was ( $F(9,123)=2.57, p<.05$ ). Additional Multiple Regression scenarios were run looking at the predictors found in the research and literature. First was on if the student had a career plan for themselves. In this scenario, career plan was the dependent variable while the previous independent variables remained the same. While looking at career plan model one had a 7.4% change, model two had 9.1% and lastly model three had 9.7%. Overall variance in career plan was ( $F(9,123)=1.46, p>.05$ ) indicating a non-significance in change. Keeping with the same independent variables, the dependent variable was now changed to Lived with Parent. This would take a look at if the student lived with their parents or not. Model one had a 31% change while Model two and three had 32.4% change. Overall variance for living with parent was ( $F(9,123)=6.57, p<.001$ ) indicating a significance in change. Next, keeping with the finds in the literature, a Multiple Regression was ran to look at the student's GPA as the dependent variable and changing the independent variables more towards parental support and resources used on campus. Model one remained the same looking at year in school, race, gender and age. Model two however changed to (1) parent relationships, (2) parents paying for school, (3) talk with parents everyday and (4) students telling parents their problems. Model three looked at (1) meeting with Advisor, (2) attended tutoring, (3) went to SI, attending a workshop and meet with professor. Model one had a 4.6% change while model two had 11.4% and lastly model three had 17.3%. Overall variance for student GPA was ( $F(14,118)=1.77, p>.05$ ) indicating a non-significance. Lastly, a multiple regression was ran looking at the students level of hope in the future as the dependent variable. The independent variables remained the same as the previous multiple regressions ran. However, in this scenario, model one had a 13.4% change while model two had 31.4% and model three had 35.6%. Overall variance for hope in the future was ( $F(14,54)=2.14, p<.05$ ) indicating a significant change.

According to the CAS mission of Learning Assistance Programs must provide students with resources and opportunities to improve their ability to learn and achieve academic success. Our results show that students who received a phone call for Early Advantage Program struggled with college writing and reading and did not have a career plan. The Early Advantage Program is effective in reaching the type of student who needs extra help. However, our study did not effectively measure how helpful the program was. Our study shows that Supplemental Instruction was the most visited of the resources offered to Early Advantage Program students regardless of whether or not they received a phone call.

### *Qualitative Results*

A total of seventeen phone and email interviews were conducted. Of those interviewed, the average age was 27 (slightly older than the sample of the survey responses) and second year was the average year in school. A series of ten questions were asked to gather a greater sense of how the student is feeling and doing. In the first questions, most students responded positively that they are doing well in their classes. Fifteen out of seventeen students all responded that they felt that are doing well if not great in their classes. Only two students reported and concerns and issues with their current classes. Of the two students, one mentioned that they had been contacted by the Early Advantage team at Chaffey College but they were still unable to improve their coursework.

“I am trying really hard in my classes but for some reason it isn’t making a difference. I have been contacted by an Early Advantage person and they gave me some tips but it isn’t working. It is just hard.”

Questions took a look to see if they took any foundational (remedial math, English or reading) courses while in college and if so how they did in them. Five students reported taking any foundational course and all five stated that they did really well in the courses. Looking into the student history though, two of the students in fact had to retake two foundational math courses over for a second time since they received a substandard grade in the first class. Two other students mentioned that they needed to take foundational courses but had not registered for them as of yet due to limited availability of class selection but knew that they planned on taking them soon and hope to do well in them. Two other students mentioned that they were not sure what foundational courses were and were not sure if they needed them. The other remaining eight students responded that they did not need any foundational courses.

“I was very lucky to have been placed into English 1A and Math 25 so I didn’t need to take any remedial courses. It would have sucked if I had to though. Thinking about it, I know I would have tried my best in those courses if I needed to take them because I know how important they are to your overall success as a student.”

Questions four and five took a look at the resources that the students were utilizing and how helpful they felt they were to their overall success as a student. Seventeen out of seventeen students mentioned that they have used some type of resource available on campus. However, there was a large variance in the types of resources and how the students felt about them as being helpful. Out of the seventeen students who indicated that they utilized the resources, seven mentioned that they attended the Writing Center, Math Success Center or the Tutoring Center only because it was required as part of their grade for class.

“I go to the Writing Center every week to do my DLAs only because I have to for my English 450 class. If I didn’t have to go I really don’t think that I would have gone. Even though it sucks going there every week I do see it as helpful – I know that it is helping me. I might use it for my other English class next semester if it isn’t a requirement – just maybe.”

Five other students mentioned that they attended learning groups and workshops as well as the Success Centers on campus to improve their grades. Out of those five students all felt that their experience was positive and they felt that the resources were helpful. Three other students mentioned utilizing the counselors as well as the Success Guides on campus. While the other two students said that they have not used any resources on campus and one student mentioned that they didn’t think it would be helpful at all for them.

Trying to get a feel how students feel about attending Chaffey College and the sense of community they have on campus was the objective of question 6. Fifteen out of the seventeen student surveyed mentioned that they didn’t mind attending Chaffey College.

“I personally do not mind being at Chaffey but I would rather not be at a Community College. It’s a decent school but far too difficult to get classes and such.”

Out of those fifteen students five indicated that it was their top choice to attend while the other ten indicated a greater sense of community. The ten students that had positive regard towards Chaffey College mentioned being part of various extracurricular activities such as the Honor Society, Associated Students and various student clubs. The more activities mentioned the stronger positive regard towards Chaffey College was reported. The remaining two students mentioned that they were not happy at Chaffey College mostly because of personal reasons. One

student indicated that she didn't really want to be in school but had to because of her parents and the other student said that she settled at Chaffey College and all she wanted to do was transfer out.

Questions seven through ten were established to gather a greater sense of how the student is feeling about their parents, their future and most importantly themselves. Question seven look primarily at the student's relationship with their parents. Ten out of seventeen students responded with an above average relationship with their parents. The ten students indicated that they are either close or very close with their parents. Each close or very close response was followed up with the words "encouraging," "motivating," or "supportive." Each student felt that they had great parents that are helpful with their journey in college. Out of the ten students five did mention that they keep their personal relationships or issues to themselves and they do not disclose that information to their parents.

"I am close with my parents - they are the ones that encourage me to complete college and to be successful. I talk to both my mother and father who are still married every day, but never about my personal life."

Three out of the seventeen students mentioned that they had just "average" relationships with their parents and that they talk to them ever so often. All three responded that they talk to their parents but not on a deep level.

"I love my parents to death but they are not the ones that I turn to for advice or even support. I would classify our relationship as average. They are there when I need something other than emotional support – for those types of concerns I have my husband and my friends."

The final two student out of the seventeen mentioned that they did not have a relationship with their parents at all. One even confided that they did know who their parents are and didn't care to know. Continuing with the student's feelings, questions eight and nine took a deeper look into the student's future and how they felt about their future. Question eight asked straight forward if they thought about their future and if they have what it looked like. While question nine asked more about how they felt about their future. Overwhelmingly, seventeen out of seventeen students interviewed indicated that they have thought about their future. Themes in the response were bright – positive – optimistic – career – money. All seventeen responses mentioned that finishing school and moving towards a career. Ten out of the seventeen students even responded that they hoped to transfer to another University so they can complete their Bachelors degree while another five mentioned getting a Masters. All students had a very positive regard towards their future and seemed to be thinking about it a lot.

“I think about my future a lot. I cannot wait to finish here at Chaffey and move to another school to get my Bachelors in psych and then my masters. I am so excited for what the future is going to hold for me. I know with my education I can get a get career going. So exciting!!!”

The final question took a look at how the students feel about themselves. Unlike the previous questions, only eight students felt above average about themselves. Indicated that they feel great about themselves and how they are doing in life in general. A theme from those eight students was confidence. Each of the eight students mentioned that they felt confident that they could do anything. Another seven students responded that they felt average about themselves and their life. A theme from those individuals was being an average person among everyone else. Another theme was that they had little to no confidence in themselves.

“How I feel about myself...I feel like I am not good at anything but average at many things. But being average is not going to get me far in life. I don't think I am good enough to be successful. I have no confidence nor self-esteem which I know isn't good but I have always been that way.”

On the extreme end, there were two students who said that they are not really happy with themselves all of the time and that they felt pressure to be perfect and will never live up to it. Both students felt that they have high hope for the future but fear that they will not be good enough to live up to their expectations or even their parent's expectations. A major theme of the two students was fear to fail expectations set by their parents or loved ones.

### **Discussion**

This study revealed significant information on the effectiveness of the Early Advantage Program at Chaffey College. One of the key findings was that students who live with their parents are more likely to visit their professors for assistance. These same students were also more likely to be in their first few years of school. This would indicate that parental involvement could have a positive influence on the likelihood of these students by encouraging communication with professors. We also could assume that younger students in their first years of college are more willing to listen and accept their parent's advice concerning school. This conflicts with some of the literature that states students living on campus are more likely to be connected to the college, including professors than students who live off campus. Due to this college being a community college, there is not an option to live on campus. The connection of students living with parents and having strong relations with faculty could be a correlation to only community college students.

Another correlation with parents and students was with parents encouraging their students to attend college and complete their assignments. A few key findings were: (1) if parents were paying for the student's schooling, (2) students who were in their first few years of college, (3) and race of students in terms of whether or not students perceived their parents as encouraging them in school. Another connection found in our research that seemed logical, was students with encouraging parents were more likely to tell their parents about their personal relationships.

Academic effort, students who do well in classes, and students with career plans and goals also had a few predictors from the students surveyed. Predictors of academic effort were based on gender. Gender was also a predictor of students who do well in classes, along with students with higher GPA's. This would indicate a certain gendered student who has a good GPA usually excels more than other students in classes. Another correlation was older students usually have a career goal set, while younger students do not. The most interesting connection was students who struggle with college reading and writing and also received an Early Advantage phone call did not have a set career plan. This would infer the students who were at risk academically were more likely to not be secure in their career plan. The most logical correlation was regarding students who visit a tutor, whom have higher GPAs than students who do not visit a tutor.

Parents who pay for their children's tuition had many different predictors according to our findings. Students who have parents financially supporting their schooling are more open about personal relationships, share about everyday experiences, are more likely to meet with an advisor, are usually younger and race is also a factor. We could conclude that when students rely on parents' finances students are more likely to have an open relationship with their parents as

well as take the responsibility to meeting with an advisor. This could be supported by Baker's (2010) findings that students who receive financial aid tend to take academics more serious and refrain from dropping out. Students who received aid from parents could give the students more incentive to be proactive in meeting with advisors to secure an academic plan.

The last few findings were regarding Early Advantage telephone calls and GPA predictions by students. The review of the t-tests indicated students who received a phone call from Early Advantage were more likely to actually visit the Early Advantage office for help. Unfortunately, visiting tutors or workshops had no connection to the phone calls. Students who were high risk and received an Early Advantage phone call had an inflated perception of their GPA. This connected to Sparkman, Maudling & Roberts (2012) findings of students with false perceptions of GPAs usually have higher risk of dropping out. It seems students with over optimistic views of GPAs are let down by their false reality, which can lead them to drop out.

#### *Strengths, Weaknesses, and Limitations*

One of the most valuable findings from the survey was discovering how effective Early Advantage phone calls were to students. The Early Advantage program at Chaffey College spends significant time, money and energy on making phone calls to at risk students. The results of this study indicate that the only correlation between the phone calls and students was supplemental instruction (SI) meetings. Students who received a phone call were more likely to visit the SI meetings. Although, SI meetings are advantageous for student's academic success, the phone calls did not connect with student's visiting professors, advisors, getting better grades, or improving their GPA. It appears that the students that visit the SI meetings are not applying the information learned to their classwork, as their grades are not reflecting any improvements.

Although the surveys had 100% participation with students surveyed and we received great data, there were still weaknesses in the study. The study was conducted within nine weeks, which did not allow time to have the survey thoroughly evaluated and critiqued by professionals. Aside from the weakness of the findings, there were also limitations of the study, which could be further researched. Race and gender are ambiguous terms in our research, as we cannot differentiate between genders or exact ages. The survey was also only conducted at one college, which was a community college. The survey could expand to other colleges, including four-year universities. Researchers that would like to challenge or expand on the study could look into the differences between 4-year universities and community colleges. They should also allow for more time to fully develop their literature and consequently their instruments.

**Appendix A**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose the best answer.

- 1) I normally excel in my academic classes.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 2) I put more effort forward in my academics than most students.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 3) I struggle in college level writing.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 4) I struggle in college level math.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 5) I struggle in college level reading.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 6) I visit a tutor.
  - Never
  - Once every week
  - Once every semester
  - Twice every semester
  - Three or more times a semester
- 7) I go to workshops at the success center.
  - Never
  - Once every week
  - Once every semester
  - Twice every semester
  - Three or more times a semester
- 8) I go to SI (Supplemental Instruction) meetings.
  - Never

- Once every week
  - Once every semester
  - Twice every semester
  - Three or more times a semester
- 9) I have visited my professor during her/his office hours this semester, Spring 2013.
- Never
  - Once
  - Twice
  - Three times
  - 4 times
  - More than 5 times
- 10) My parent(s) or guardian encouraged me to attend college.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 11) My parent(s) or guardians are paying for my college.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 12) I keep my parents/guardians informed about all of my relationships.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 13) I would never tell my parents/guardians about my problems.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 14) I share my everyday experiences with my parents/guardians.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 15) I have a clear about my career plan.
- Very unclear
  - Somewhat clear
  - Clear
  - Very clear
- 16) I prefer to go with the flow.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 17) I prefer to plan my day-to-day life.

- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 18) I feel that I fit in on campus.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 19) I do not have hope in my future.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 20) I feel in control of my life.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 21) I feel as though my life is NOT stable.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 22) I sometimes feel depressed.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 23) My relationships with others are healthy.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 24) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 25) I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 26) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- Strongly agree

- Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 27) I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 28) I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 29) I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 30) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 31) I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 32) I certainly feel useless at times.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 33) At times I think I am no good at all.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 34) For this semester I plan on receiving:
- Mostly As
  - Mostly Bs
  - Mostly Cs
  - Mostly Ds
  - Mostly Fs
- 35) After this semester predict what will happen to your GPA:
- It will go up
  - It will go down
  - It will stay the same
- 36) Did you have a high school counselor?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not Sure
- 37) How often do you meet with an advisor/academic counselor at Chaffey College:
- Never
  - Once a year
  - Once every semester

- Twice a semester
  - Three times a semester
  - More than 3 times a semester
- 38) How often do you feel test anxiety:
- Never
  - Only around midterms
  - Only around finals
  - Whenever an assignment or test is due
- 39) Do you receive financial aid:
- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
- 40) If so, what kind:
- Grants
  - Loans
  - Scholarships
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill-in or choose the best answer.

41) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

- 42) Gender:
- Male
  - Female
  - Other

43) Race: \_\_\_\_\_

44) Year in school:

- 1<sup>st</sup>
- 2<sup>nd</sup>
- 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 4<sup>th</sup>
- 5<sup>th</sup>
- 6<sup>th</sup>+

45) What is your GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

46) If you have a career goal please explain:

---

47) Do you currently live with your parents:

- Yes
- No

48) Have you ever received a phone call about early awareness?

- Yes
- No

49) Would you be interested in being interviewed for this project?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, please provide your email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

1. Explain to me how you feel you are doing in your classes so far.
2. Have you taken any foundational courses while in college?
3. How did you do with the foundational courses?
4. What resources have you used on campus?
5. Do you feel that these resources have been helpful?
6. Tell me how you feel about attending Chaffey College?
7. Could you tell us about your relationship with your parents?
8. Have you thought about your future? If so, what does it look like?
9. Explain how you feel about your future?
10. Tell me how you feel about yourself?

## References

- Adams, C. (2011). Colleges try to unlock secrets to student retention. *Education Digest*, 77(4), 19-23.
- Baker, B. H. (2010). Faculty ratings of retention strategies for minority nursing students. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 31(4), 216-220.
- Fike, D. S., & Fike, R. (2008). Predictors of first-year student retention in the community college. *Community College Review*, 36(2), 68-88.
- Folger, W. A., Carter J. A., & Chase, P. B. (2004). Supporting first generation college freshmen with small group intervention. *College Student Journal*, 38(3), 472-476.
- Gerdes, H., & Mallinckrodt, B. (1994). Emotional, social, and academic adjustment of college students: A longitudinal study of retention. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 72, 281-288.
- Liang, B., Allison, T. J., Taylor, C. A. & Williams, L. M. (2002). Mentoring college aged women, the relational approach. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2), 271-288.
- Morrow, J., & Ackermann, M. E. (2012). Intention to persist and retention of first-year students: the importance of motivation and sense of belonging. *College Student Journal*, 46(3), 483-491.
- Oseguera, L., & Byung Shik, R. (2009). The influence of institutional retention climates on student persistence to degree completion: a multilevel approach. *Research In Higher Education*, 50(6), 546-569.

## References

- Siegel, M. J. (2011). Reimagining the retention problem: Moving out thinking from end product to by product. *About Campus*, 15(6), 8-18.
- Singell, L. D. & Waddell, G. R. (2010). Modeling retention at a large public university: can at-risk students be identified early enough to treat? *Research in Higher Education*, 51(6), 546-572.
- Sherman, T. M., Giles, M. B., and Williams-Green, J. (1994). Assessment and retention of black students in higher education. *Journal of Negro Education*, 63, 164-180.
- Smith, C. P., & Winterbottom, M. T. (1970). Personality characteristics of college students on academic probation. *Journal of Personality*, 38(3), 379-391.
- Sparkman, L. A., Maulding, W. S., & Roberts, J. G. (2012). Non-cognitive predictors of student Success in college. *College Student Journal*, 46(3), 642-652.
- Tinto, V. (2007). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention*, 8(1), 1-19.