THE EFFECT OF FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE CURRICULUM ON PERSISTENCE AT GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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ABSTRACT

This study recognizes the importance of persistence of students in higher education and explores the contribution that a first-year experience course has on an urban college in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The purpose of this study was to acquire student and faculty perceptions of the most important curricular topics of a first-year experience course that led to student persistence. Research has shown that first-year experience courses contribute to student success and increased persistence. Further, the current challenging economic conditions, changing student demographics, and heightened focus on accountability may require community colleges to become more strategic in addressing student success and persistence.

This qualitative study examined perceptions of persisted new and experienced students and faculty who have experience with College Learning Studies (CLS100) course. The study design was predicated on one central question: What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced students' persistence at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC)? Four secondary research questions addressed whether or not differences in perceptions exist between new and experienced students and between students and faculty about which CLS100 elements lead to student persistence, what elements may make it less meaningful, and what is missing that might enhance course meaningfulness.

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Categories of themes, generated through an inductive analysis of focus group transcripts and facilitator notes produced from these interviews, resulted in these five categories: Social Integration, Academic Integration, College Services Integration, Skill Development, and Academic and Career Planning. These categories were then compared with the CLS100 learning outcomes during deductive analysis. Overall, the completion of CLS100 appeared to influence the participants' academic successes. Most participants gave overwhelmingly positive responses regarding benefits acquired from CLS100. The study suggests that CLS100 is effective for students.

Community colleges attract large numbers of first-year students with diverse needs; however, little research has been conducted on first-year programming that contributes to student success and persistence. The bulk of prior research has taken place in four-year settings using quantitative methodology. This study not only informs further development of the CLS100 curriculum at GRCC, it also suggests implications for the larger academic community regarding first-year experience courses and their curricula at the community college.

To my husband David Alan Anderson, who made my pursuit of this doctoral degree possible through his hard work, strength, support, and devotion.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The American community college dates back to the early years of the twentieth century (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Community colleges were first titled as junior colleges until the early 1940s (Cohen, et al., 2008). Many community colleges started as extensions of high school with an emphasis on transfer to a four-year institution and liberal arts education (Townsend & Bragg, 2006). However, as the purpose of junior colleges became much more comprehensive and public funds were secured, the institutional title was changed to community colleges during the 1970s (Cohen, et al., 2008).

The historical mission of community colleges has always been to provide universal access to an affordable education beyond high school (Myran, 2009). However, after World War II, federal and state policies started the gradual shift to enhance the mission of the higher education system of junior colleges, later titled community colleges (Townsend & Bragg, 2006). The GI Bill of Rights was enacted in 1944 which greatly impacted college enrollment post-World War II as it provided educational opportunities for service men and women. However, it was President Harry Truman's 1947 Commission on Higher Education, known as the Zook Commission, which marked a

transformation of higher education to become more inclusive and provided that there must be community-based colleges to serve local educational needs. It was the Zook Commission that advocated for community colleges to be the mechanism to enhance access to higher education (Townsend, et al., 2006). The most crucial impact of the 1947 Commission report was to provide equality for all students through access and financial support.

Joliet Junior College, located in Illinois, was the first junior college to open its doors in 1901 (Townsend, et al.). Townsend, et al. (2006), in their community college research, indicated that university leaders William Rainey Harper, University of Chicago and David Starr Jordan, Stanford University, urged that junior colleges were conceived as a contrivance to take the burden off universities to educate freshman and sophomore students. The goal upon completion of a student's first two years of college was to either transfer to a four-year institution or exit community college with enough requisite skills to acquire viable employment. The mission of community colleges has evolved since the first two-year college opened its doors over 100 years ago. In addition to the traditional open access mission, community colleges are now inclusive of a substantial body of developmental and adult basic education programs.

Community colleges play a significant role in serving students who desire a post-secondary education. Since the first junior college opened its doors in 1901, 100 million students have been served (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2013). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) reports that there are 1,166 community colleges in the United States and in 2009 community colleges enrolled thirteen million students, with eight million representing credit students and five million

non-credit students (AACC, 2012). The primary credentials community colleges grant are certificates and associate's degrees. In academic year 2008-09, community colleges conferred 630,000 associate's degrees and granted 425,000 certificates (AACC, 2012).

Community colleges are appealing to students as they offer open admissions, affordable tuition, convenient locations, flexible scheduling and a wide variety of academic programs and support services. Because of their open admissions, community colleges serve a higher population of students that have a low level of academic preparedness, undecided majors, multiple risk factors or lack of personal commitment toward goal completion. Kane and Rouse (1999) stated, "community colleges have traditionally striven to increase access to higher education through an open admissions policy, often not even requiring a high school diploma – and low, or no, tuition (p. 64)." All of the factors associated with open access result in low rates of retention, persistence and completion at community colleges during a time of heightened accountability standards.

According to Achieving the Dream, community colleges enroll nearly half of all United States undergraduates and fewer than half of these students complete their goal of acquiring a certificate or degree within six years. (Achieving the Dream, n.d.). According to the American College Testing (ACT) Program, average retention trends at two-year colleges between 1982-2010, freshman to sophomore years, was 56 percent and completion rates for those who graduated in three years or fewer was 28 percent. The average retention rate at four-year colleges or universities was 68 percent and graduation rate of five years or fewer was 60 percent (ACT, 2012). These figures clearly indicate that two-year institutions are lagging far behind their four-year counterparts in regards to

persistence and completion of their student population. At the same time, there are considerable differences in the needs of these respective populations. Although these numbers have fluctuated over the years, little or no improvement has been realized at community colleges since ACT began tracking the numbers in 1983.

The historical open access mission of community colleges contributes to high levels of departure, most notably during the first-year of college. Many studies find that entering a community college rather than a four-year institution significantly lowers the probability that a student will attain a baccalaureate degree (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, Dougherty, 1987). Why do these students enroll at community colleges but not stay? Students start and stop attending post-secondary education for a variety of reasons. The reasons students do not succeed range from lack of personal commitment, academic preparation, inability to socially integrate, intellectual demands, external personal demands and lack of institutional fit (Myran, 2009).

To properly understand the scope of student success as it relates to persistence, retention and completion, it must first be defined. Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek (2006) broadly defines student success as "academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance (p. 7)." This comprehensive definition of student success creates tension for community college leaders to determine best practices and policies that contribute toward student success all the while wanting to remain committed to the historical open access mission.

Importance of Persistence in Community College

The open access mission of community colleges has not been without criticism. The criticism has been most particularly around the question of accountability. Community college persistence and attrition have been the subjects of considerable research over the past forty years with little improvement. Today, persistence and retention as it relates to completion is at the forefront of state and national accountability standards. Higher learning has taken on a new importance in today's knowledge society as the push for high quality degrees became prevalent in 2009 with the announcement of President Obama's National Graduation Initiative. Higher education has been challenged to double the number of degrees conferred by 2020; and community colleges have, for the first time in their history, been touted by the President as the educational system that could ultimately get the nation to that goal (Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation [OSICP], 2012).

Since their inception, community colleges have seen a shift in student demographics raising additional concerns with persistence, retention and completion. The shift in community college student demographics has been realized in the area of developmental education. With open access, comes ease of student admission but that is not to say that all students are ready to enter post-secondary education. More than half of students who enter community colleges are required to take at least one remediation course to prepare them for college level work (Scott-Layton, 2011). Further, the Center for Community College Student Engagement's (CCSSE) *A Matter of Degrees* report (2012) indicates that 72 percent of students who took placement tests needed developmental education in at least one area. Byrk and Toch (2012) stated that 60 percent of entering community college students are required to take at least one

developmental education course, while 70 percent of those enrolled in those courses do not complete them. The impact of non-completion causes these students' college careers to end before it even gets started.

Without dedicated resources, proper academic programming and student services, an increase in persistence rates will not be obtained. As important as persistence is, ACT indicates that only 59.5 percent of institutions possess a position that is responsible for persistence and related student success services (ACT, 2010). Despite years of research and implementation of persistence efforts, there are still areas that are not understood about the complex processes that lead to a student's decision-making process to depart an institution or the entire higher education system. A deeper assessment of student learning both in and outside the classroom is central to obtaining a deeper understanding of institutional effectiveness. Keeling, Wall, Underhile & Dungy (2008) propose that "assessments of learning focus on the effectiveness of the institution, not just the ability of students… (p. 4)."

If this country is going to meet President Obama's 2020 college graduation initiative, an estimated 10 million more Americans between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four will need to earn a two or four-year degree according to the U.S. Department of Education (Amario, 2012). This estimate proves that educational institutions are facing a daunting task, especially given that a great amount of attention and effort has already been focused toward this initiative to reducing attrition and improving the persistence and success rates of their students. An assessment of past attempts to improve student success needs to take place at the institutional level in order to make necessary changes to move the completion needle. "It is incumbent upon individual

institutions to develop interventions that are suitable for their student populations, improve the quality of the learning experience and support their educational missions (Andrade, 2008, p. 485)." Keeling, et al. (2008) stated that "assessment is a means; not an end (p. 5)" and utilizing assessment as a tool, institutions accomplish important purposes and goals toward enhancing student success.

Persistence Research and Theory

There has been an abundant amount of research conducted for over 40 years on various topics that contribute toward student departure behaviors and their decision-making processes. The leading studies conducted that have led to the development of theoretical models of college student attrition, persistence and completion were led by Spady (1970, 1971), Tinto (1975, 1993, 2012), Pascarella (1980), Bean and Metzner (1985), Astin (1984), Pascarella & Terenzini (1991), and Braxton (2000). These studies provide an understanding of attrition and characteristics that impact a student's decision to leave college. However, further research is necessary to make multiple connections between student behaviors, institutional and classroom experiences toward understanding the "departure puzzle" (Braxton, Sullivan and Johnson, 1997) in order to improve persistence and completion rates especially at two-year institutions. Summers (2003) indicated that multivariate studies are continuing to identify the intricacies of student academic outcomes as they relate to a host of student characteristics.

The lowest persistence rates at community colleges occur during the first-year of a two-year college experience. There is overwhelming evidence that student success is determined by experiences during the first-year (Noel, Levitz, Saluri & Associates, 1985). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006), the percentage

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distribution of those high school students beginning their community college experience in 2003-04 was 42.2 percent overall with no degree obtained and no longer enrolled at first institution. Of those who began in 2003-04, only 27.2 percent were still retained at the first institution and yet no degree was acquired as of 2006 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). However, according to the AACC (n.d.), half of the students who receive a baccalaureate degree attended a community college.

There has been significant attention given to first-year college students in the past two decades with the number of issues facing higher education (Schnell, Louis, Doetkott, 2003). With awareness heightened on the importance of the first-year of college, many institutions of higher education are implementing first-year experience courses (also known as freshman seminars, first-year orientations, first-year seminars) to intentionally have a system to acclimate, incorporate, prepare and persist first-year students.

First-Year Experience Courses

First-year experience courses are defined as "a means of integrating students both academically and socially during the first-year of college" (Schnell, et al., 2003, pg.54). The history of first-year experience courses has been traced back to the 1880s and these courses have grown in popularity; Barefoot, Warnock, Dickinson, Richardson, and Roberts reported in 1998 that more than 70 percent of accredited undergraduate institutions offer a similar course (as cited by Schnell, et al., 2003).

A 1991 study conducted by Kangas interviewed students who withdrew and found that 71 percent of them considered leaving in the first four weeks of the semester (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Researchers are continually seeking to uncover the reasons students decide to leave, especially during that first semester or year of college in order to

build appropriate early intervention strategies. Andrade (2007) shared the insight of John Gardner who believed that it is essential for leaders to know the importance of the first-year of college as the transitional year that sets the foundation for subsequent years of a student's college career.

Researchers Bean and Metzner (1980) and Tinto (1993) indicated that social integration into college life is a mechanism to improve persistence. Social integration pertains to the similarity between the student and institutional social systems (Braxton, Hirschy & McClendon, 2004). Additional research by Bean & Metzner (1985), Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), Braxton (2000) and Summers (2003) stated that there are multiple variables that contribute to student attrition beyond social integration including academic, intent, background, psychological, and environmental variables. Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement research included institutional programming by looking at program or policy effectiveness. The goals of first-year experience courses strongly support these research theories through assimilation into the institution both socially and academically.

Institutions that take persistence, completion and student success seriously are implementing programs and services that support students; especially first-year experience courses. A national survey conducted by the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition indicates that over 80 percent (n=629) of participating institutions offer first-year experience courses (NRC, 2004). These programs should be substantial and have large impact, and should not be used as a solution for a small percentage of students. According to a 2010 study by ACT, one of the top three practices that make the greatest contribution toward persistence is the

freshman for-credit seminar as indicated by the top 10 percent of the respondents. It should be noted that this is a substantial indication of the importance of first-year experience courses as these respondents had a pool of 94 best practices from which to select (ACT, 2010).

There have been many studies conducted that conclude that first-year experience courses do lead to student success. A study conducted on 1,700 students from 1991-1994 at a Midwest University indicated significantly greater graduation rates for those enrolled in a first-year seminar (Schenell, et al., 2003). A similar study conducted by Boudreau & Kromrey (1994) found a positive relationship between the completion of a freshman seminar course and college persistence and graduation. Although there have been many studies conducted on the effect of first-year seminars, very little research has been conducted on community college students or an analysis of the effectiveness of these courses (Andrade, 2007).

Importance of a Higher Education

When students decide to stop attending college, both the student and the institution are affected. Students who leave with college credit prior to graduating may not fully understand their missed opportunities. These students may have their personal goals, aspirations, self-esteem and earnings potential hampered by non-completion. Employment rates increase as an individual continues his/her education. A National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2010 report indicates that young adults between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four with at least a bachelor's degree had a full-time employment rate that was over 30 percent higher than that of their peers who had not completed high school, 74 percent versus 41 percent (National Center for Educational

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Statistics [NCES], 2012). NCES research also indicated the earnings potential of an educated individual increases vastly the higher the degree conferred by reporting that in 2010 young adults with a bachelor's degree earned 114 percent more than young adults without a high school diploma or its equivalent, 50 percent more than high school completers, and 22 percent more than those with an associate's degree (NCES, 2012).

In addition to low unemployment rates and higher earnings, students encounter increased intrinsic rewards through the acquisition of a higher education. These intrinsic rewards can be found through the increased social and intellectual capacities of an educated person. In addition, higher education impacts the social, emotional, moral and personal growth of students. These non-monetary values of acquiring a higher education fulfill the ability for a student to grow their whole person and become model citizens. "An educated citizenry is an asset to society, that economic, social, and psychological benefits accrue to people who have been to college… (Cohen, A.M. & Associates, 1975, p. 25)."

At the institutional level, poor success or persistence rates can impact the reputation of the organization, have financial consequences and create an accountability risk. Communities may suffer, as non-completers may not acquire the necessary skills or credentials to enter the workforce. Attrition touches institutions on a multitude of levels as well as the communities they serve. With heightened accountability, institutional leaders must find appropriate intervention strategies that focus on persistence and student success.

Statement of the Problem

Enrollment in post-secondary institutions has been on the rise. Between 2000 and 2010, undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 37 percent, from 13.2 million to 18.1 million students. Projections indicate that undergraduate enrollment will continue to increase, reaching 20.6 million students in 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Although enrollment is on the rise, student completion rates are not. Less than half of community college students reach their goal within six years after beginning college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). All of this attrition is costly to institutions. To complicate matters, institutions are now beginning to be held accountable for the completion agenda through performance based funding. Performance funding finances in public higher education institutions are based on outcomes such as persistence, course and degree completion and job placement rather than inputs such as enrollment (Dougherty, K.J., Natow, R.S., 2009).

There is strong evidence that community college students are confused and overwhelmed with navigating the higher education system (Scott-Clayton, 2011). Further complicating matters, community college students encounter personal barriers toward academic success. Myran (2009) stated that community college leaders must understand these barriers in order to take action where a positive impact can be made on institutional policies and practices to enhance a student's ability to succeed.

Enrollment plays a significant role in institutional budgets so high attrition wreaks havoc on balancing budgets. Further, as higher education budgets are diminished at the local, state and national levels, community colleges are now forced to evaluate business and operating strategies as they work toward improving accountability and completion

metrics all the while holding true to the historical missions of community colleges. This evaluation process requires assessment of all programs and services to determine what to fund and what to discontinue. Assessment is necessary to shift funds to support the programs and services that help meet these new metrics facing community colleges and move the completion needle.

Although enrollment numbers are critical to the finances of colleges and universities, more energy must be placed on persistence strategies and not recruitment activities. Tinto (1987) clearly cautioned leaders when placing energies into recruitment activities. He recommended that institutions devote energy and resources in implementing persistence strategies. As competition heightens in higher education with a variety of instructional modalities, locations and academic programming, institutional leaders must restrain themselves from focusing on increasing enrollment through recruitment efforts but rather toward understanding and implementing strategies that retain students toward completing their goals.

Although extensive research has been conducted on the overarching topics of retention, attrition, persistence and drop-out rates at colleges and universities, still little is known about the impact at the institutional level, particularly within community colleges and first-year experience courses. "A much more rigorous research agenda focused on community college students is needed to inform and evaluate future actions" (Goldrick-Rab, S., 2010, p. 454).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the short-term and long-term benefits of a first-year experience course curriculum at an urban community college

in Michigan as it relates to student persistence. Perceptions of both students and faculty on the first-year experience course curriculum as it contributes to student success will be investigated. Studies have recognized greater similarities rather than differences between the experiences and perceptions of students who continue to pursue their educational goals and of those who leave. With this new lens, the need has been established to examine reasons for leaving through understanding the factors that influenced students to remain (Glogowska, Young, Lockyer, 2007).

The central characteristic of qualitative research is the allowance of individuals to construct their own realities within their social worlds (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) further stated that qualitative researchers find purpose to "understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (p. 23)." Because the focus of the study is on how students and faculty construct their own meaning of experiences with Grand Rapids Community College's first-year experience course, College Learning Studies (CLS100) curriculum, a constructivist epistemology became the guiding principle to inform the development of the research questions and methodology.

Research Questions

The design of this study was predicated on one central question: What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced student's persistence at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC)? For the purpose of this study new students are defined as: students who took first-year experience course, CLS100, and persisted to the next semester. The new students in this study are first time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 fall 2012 and persisted to the winter 2013 semester. Experienced students are defined as: students who took first-

year experience course, CLS100, and persisted for one or more years at GRCC. The experienced students are first time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 during or before the fall 2011 semester and remained enrolled fall 2012.

The following are the sub questions for this study:

1. Are there differences in the perceptions of new and experienced students about what topics taught in CLS100 curriculum contributed toward their ability to persist?

2. How do students and faculty differ in their perceptions of the topics of the CLS100 curriculum that contribute toward student persistence?

3. What do faculty and students perceive to be present in the CLS100 curriculum that make it less meaningful?

4. What do faculty and students perceive to be missing in the CLS100 curriculum to make it more meaningful?

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the belief that the students and faculty had unique and individual experiences with the College Learning Studies (CLS100) curriculum. Their construction of their own knowledge about CLS100 course effectiveness that led to student persistence was the focus of the research study. Their construction of knowledge may have occurred through cognitive or psychological Constructivism (i.e.: individually) or through social Constructivism (i.e.: interaction with others) as it relates to the CLS100 course. By utilizing a constructivist epistemological approach to this qualitative study

the researcher was allowed to examine the perceptions that students and faculty constructed for themselves after their experience with the CLS100 curriculum.

The primary method of research was focus group interviews. Since the study is analyzing mainly a community college course it is important to bring in information from individuals that have had exposure to and experience with the course. The use of focus group interviews allowed the researcher to collect data on a topic from a group of people who have knowledge or experience of the topic (Merriam, 2009). Further, Constructivism allows for meaning to be constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world (Crotty, 1998). The richness of a participant's experience with the CLS100 curriculum is derived through the social integration of a focus group. Participants were able to share their personal perceptions and experiences that resulted in their construct of meaningfulness with the CLS100 curriculum. Crotty (2003) stated that Constructionism claims that as human beings engage with the world they are interpreting they then are they then able to construct meanings. The secondary method of research was to cross analyze student and faculty perceptions to the stated CLS100 course outcomes. It is through this cross comparison that the researcher was further able to answer the research questions.

Significance of the Study

Student persistence and success are at the forefront of several national initiatives and community colleges have been deemed the institutions of choice to help fulfill these completion agendas. There are many national initiatives such as Lumina Foundation's Achieving the Dream initiative, Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation Completion by Design, Walmart Foundation PRESS (Persistence, Retention and Student Success)

Program and AACC's Reclaiming the American Dream 21st Century Initiative all striving

to have a part in meeting the Obama Administration's 2020 American Graduation

Initiative.

As discovered by Townsend, et al. (2006), many studies have found that entering

community college students, rather than their counterparts at universities, have

significantly lower probability of attaining a baccalaureate degree; Dougherty, 1994

along with Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991 are two studies that support this theory. The

community college student on average had an attainment rate of 11 to 19 percent lower

than four-year college peers. Further, Tinto (2012) stated that less than one-third of

entering community college students will acquire their associate's degree within a period

of six years. Tinto (2001) also stated that community college students will only acquire a

certificate, associate's or bachelor's degree at the rate of 40 percent.

Although community colleges have experienced tremendous increases in

enrollment and have made vast strides in providing access and opportunity to higher

education, very little has been done to improve student success or college completion.

Cohen, et al. (1975) indicated that colleges would do better to focus on no growth and

utilize energy to improve the population they currently have. Swail (2006) shared the

outcome of an interview with Kuh stating, "putting educational effective policies and

practices in place benefit students in terms of their learning and various institutional

bottom lines including graduation rates and tuition revenues (Swail, 2006)." Graduation

rates at community colleges have remained less than 50 percent for decades. Improving

these rates will take time, energy, understanding, commitment and courage to change.

First and foremost, leaders must understand current institutional policies, practices,

services and programming as well as student outcome data prior to making changes. Benchmarking of best practices should also be conducted. Through this deeper dive into the current institutional practices in comparison to external best practices, leaders will be better suited to make informed programming and service decisions to assist with improved persistence and success rates.

The first area of significance in this study is the analysis of the first-year experience curriculum. An assessment of the curriculum provides an opportunity to evaluate its effectiveness toward student success (Keeling, et al., 2008). Although first-year experience courses are one of the most popular persistence programs, research indicates that these courses may have a common purpose but vary greatly in delivery, characteristics, student outcomes and curricula. Andrade (2008) states that first-year experience courses hold the same purpose for acclimating student into the institution and skill development, the characteristics of the course vary in course objectives, class size, content, grading and assessments. To date, very little research has been conducted on what content should be placed in a first-year experience course curriculum or on the student experience within such courses.

Mechur-Karp (2011) stated that an area that needs further research is the connection between student perceptions to their academic outcomes. Students typically have little influence on course design or institutional support systems. Students do, however, have the right to withdraw from the institution and therefore possess the power to sabotage strategies that are intended to improve institutional rates of persistence (Glogowska, et al., 2007). Glogowska, et al. (2007) further indicated that strategies cannot be effective without inclusion of the student experience; the only way to do this is

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through research that "listens to the student voice and incorporates student perspectives (p. 75)."

This research project took place at GRCC in the city of Grand Rapids in the State of Michigan during the timeframe of November through December, 2012. Through focus group interviews with faculty, the pedagogy utilized in the CLS100 course was analyzed to decipher similarities and differences. These focus group interviews with faculty further functioned to ascertain what key elements within the curriculum have led to student persistence at GRCC. A comparative analysis was conducted to assess the differences in perception between students and faculty of the CLS100 curriculum as they contribute to persistence of new and experienced students. Finally, this study analyzed related course syllabi to determine if the stated learning outcomes are evident and embedded into the curriculum.

The second area of significance in this qualitative study is that it was conducted at a community college. Most research on student success resides with four-year institutions where quantitative methodology was utilized. Hoyt (1999) stated, "Extensive research has been conducted on retention in higher education…most of the research, however, has been conducted at four-year colleges and universities rather than community colleges (p. 51)." Persistence and retention theories combine pre-existing characteristics, external forces and institutional factors as the main drivers toward persistence in post-secondary education (Bean & Metzner, 1985, Tinto, 1993). Mechur-Karp (2011) states that these theories, particularly Tinto's are the "dominant frame through which researchers and practitioners view student success, but they provide little guidance for community colleges (p. 1)." Student behavior and decision-making at community colleges are

potentially different and worthy of exploration. This study will embark on analyzing

community college student persistence utilizing qualitative research methodology

through focus group interviews and syllabi analysis.

The final area of significance is that the results of this study can inform GRCC

leaders and educators through case study methodology around student persistence as they

relate to the curriculum utilized in College Learning Studies (CLS100). The abundant

amount of literature on student success can inform decisions; however, it is important for

leaders to fully understand what works for the students enrolled at their particular

institution. Jenkins (2006) stated that there has been little rigorous research on

institutional effectiveness in community colleges as it relates to the promotion of student

success. By acquiring a deeper understanding of the topics perceived as most important

as described by both students and faculty can benefit college administrators and faculty in

enhancing the current curriculum. Tight (2004) suggested a need to examine students'

perspectives on courses and support systems to determine if they are actually working in

the ways they were designed. This study took into account these various elements toward

determining the effectiveness of the CLS100 curriculum to enhance student success at

GRCC. Finally, the results of this study provide GRCC leaders and educators with value

added data to make an informed decision to support whether to mandate this course for

all entering freshman to enhance student success.

Limitations

There are numerous limitations with this research study. First, there may be

concern of the researcher's ability to set aside biases through the creation, collection and

analysis of data as an employee and former instructor of CLS100 for Grand Rapids

Community College. Second, the students who participated in the study did so voluntarily

as well as took CLS100 voluntarily. Third, this study only analyzed one Michigan

community college around student persistence based on a first-year experience course;

therefore, result generalizability to other community colleges may not be possible. Yin

(2009) indicated that this limitation also raises concerns about the ability for scientific

generalization. Fourth, the study only analyzed those students who successfully

completed the course. Therefore, there are limitations in not comparing the experience

with students who have not taken the course as well as with those who did not successful

complete the course. Finally, the research project involved one case, GRCC in the city of

Grand Rapids in the State of Michigan that was bound by place and by time.

Definition of Terms

The primary focus of this study was to determine the most effective aspects of a

first-year experience course curriculum as it relates to persistence and student success.

The following are key terms utilized in this study:

Affordable –The ability for a student to financially support tuition, fees and

related educational costs.

Attrition – A student's departure from an institution and possibly from the entire

higher education system.

Barriers – Factors that prevent or impact a student's abilities to begin, retain and

complete a higher education.

CLS100 – College Learning Studies, a first-year experience course at Grand

Rapids Community College in the State of Michigan.

Completion Agenda – institutional persistence, transfer and completion rates.

Commuter – A non-residential student.

Drop outs – A former student who chooses to stop attending higher education.

Experienced Student – Student who took the first-year experience course, CLS100, and persisted for one or more years at GRCC. The experienced students are first time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 during or before the fall 2011 semester and remained enrolled in fall 2012.

First-Year Experience Course – A course designed to acclimate a student to the social and academic aspects of an institution during their freshman or first-year in college. Also known as freshman seminars, first-year seminars, freshman success course, freshman experience course, extended orientations and student success seminar.

GRCC – Grand Rapids Community College

New Student – Student who took first-year experience course, CLS100, and persisted the next semester. The new students in this study are first time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 fall 2012 and persisted to the winter 2013 semester.

Non-Completers – A student enrolled at an institution but does not complete a declared program of study and does not re-enroll.

Open Access – In this study, the term open access (or open-door, open admission, open door of educational opportunity) shall be defined as "a set of principles and ideas, a philosophy on which the community college is founded. The open door as a philosophy founded on the faith that everyone can, through education, achieve their academic, career, and other life goals" (Myran, 2009, p. 1).

Persistence – Continuous enrollment by students enrolled in higher education until educational goal is attained or degree completion.

Retention – A student who completes their degree program or fulfills goal attainment at the institution.

Stop outs – A student enrolled in higher education but stops attending for a period of time but returns to higher education.

System Departure – A student who leaves an institution and does not re-enroll at another institution, resulting in an exit from the entire system of higher education.

Two-Year Community College – In this study, the terms two-year college and community college are defined as "any institution accredited to award the Associate's in Arts or Associate's in Science as its highest degree" (Cohen, et al., 2008, p. 5).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem, significance and purpose of the study, research methodology as well as provided a glossary of terms relevant to the study. Chapter 2 consists of a literature review that provides a history of community colleges, community college faculty and students, review of attrition and persistence research conducted in community colleges as well as first-year experience courses. Chapter 3 provides the methodology section for the study, which includes: a definition of mixed methods research including case studies as a qualitative method of inquiry to focus groups, artifact and document analysis; an overview of the research site and participants, as well as a description of the data collection and analysis. Chapter 3 also discusses the role of the researcher. Chapter 4 provides post-prospectus methodology including

execution of the study. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and their importance as well as discusses applicability to departure research and theories.

Summary

This chapter provided information on student enrollment and attrition rates impacting our nation's community colleges. Also addressed in this chapter was the positive impact of first-year experience course on student success. The researcher addressed the limitations in the literature around studies dedicated to understanding community college student success. Finally, this chapter outlined the theoretical framework of this study and provided a detailed outline of the chapters.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents literature regarding first-year experience courses, their curricula and impact on community college students. The research questions to be addressed reside around the perceptions of both faculty and students of the necessary skills acquired in a first-year experience course that led to students' ability to persist. This literature review provides a clear indication why these research questions need analysis as well as illustrates the lack of literature relative to first-year experience course content at community colleges. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview of the community college mission in higher education, factors relevant to community college student persistence and why these institutions should focus more attention on first-year experience courses.

Community Colleges

History. Community colleges have a relatively brief history compared to universities with the first public two-year college opening in 1901. Community college missions also vary a great deal from their university peers. Myran (2009) stated, "from the beginning of the public community college movement in Joliet, Illinois, in 1901, the

principle of universal, low-cost access to education beyond high school was established (p. 2)." Cohen, et al. (2008) defined community college as "any institution regionally accredited to award an associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree (p. 5)."

There are two main historical events that have taken place to dramatically impact community college education. First, in 1944 with the passage of the GI Bill of Rights, this afforded World War II veterans the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education. The second phenomenon that took place was the enactment of the Truman Commission in 1947 by President Truman. This Commission "called for a national network of low-cost, comprehensive colleges to serve the education needs of local communities (Myran, 2009, p. 2)." The Commission Report is deemed to be the reason for large scale, rapid growth of junior colleges and is instrumental in granting equal educational opportunities throughout the United States.

Cohen, et al. (2008) stated the increase of community colleges took place in the twentieth century with the growth of secondary enrollments. The growth rate of both secondary schools and colleges tapered off during the 1970s but increased again in the 1990s according to Cohen, et al. (2008). Many questioned why community colleges were considered to be the vehicle to provide post-secondary education. Cohen, et al. (2008) stated that the main reason for this consideration was because many prominent nineteenth and early twentieth century educators wanted universities to stop offering freshman and sophomore classes and referred students for those courses to the junior colleges. Townsend, et al. (2006) further pointed out that providing access to a baccalaureate degree was an early role of the two-year college.

Structure, size, and scope. Although community colleges started as small home town, place-based organizations that enabled students to prepare for transfer to a four-year institution, the community college mission has greatly expanded today to service a wide variety of community and student needs. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) stated that although the two-year movement focused on establishing post-secondary educational opportunities in neighborhoods, the expansion of community colleges now provides students the ability to commute to these institutions within an one-hour timeframe resulting in the shift away from the original neighborhood concept (AACC, 2012). Further, the AACC stated that students can acquire an associate's degree fully on-line at 41 percent of all public community colleges (AACC, 2012). Although there is a broadening of the geographic regions as well as pedagogical formatting of community colleges, there is still great pride taken in serving the communities for which they reside.

Community colleges come in a variety of formats including predominantly Hispanic or historically black colleges, tribal colleges/ predominantly Native American schools, women's colleges and religious affiliate colleges. Community colleges also vary greatly by size. Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a nationally recognized leader in data collection and analysis of student engagement in community colleges, defines colleges by like institution size of small (up to 4,499 students), medium (4,500-7,999 students), large (8,000-14,999 students) and extra-large (15,000 or greater students).

The structure and programs offered at community colleges vary greatly across the country and are based on the needs and demands of the communities they serve. Cohen,

et al. (2008) indicated that the collegiate function of community colleges is developmental education, continuing education, academic transfer, vocational and technical education and liberal arts. This comprehensive and expansive collegiate function of community colleges has been contested by many for over 30 years (Dougherty, 2004). Today, this debate continues as these competing demands force community colleges to attempt to be all things to all people without infinite number of resources in a heightened time of accountability.

Gleazer (1980) stated that community colleges can serve as the nexus of a community learning system as the respondent to the learning needs of a population. Although there are many facets of learning that can take place in a community, a community college presence provides an avenue for credit or non-credit education, training, retraining or personal interest education. Community colleges have historically also been seen as the conduit to employers through workforce training as well as to four-year transfer institutions.

Enrollment. According to Townsend & Bragg in the *ASHE Reader on Community Colleges* (2006), the United States has approximately 1,200 community colleges that enroll roughly 40 percent of all students and approximately half of all students in post-secondary institutions. Further, the authors indicate that community colleges enroll approximately half of the all students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The National Digest of Education Statistics reports that 599,817 associate's degrees were conferred by two-year degree granting institutions during the fall of 2009 (NCES, 2012). The Digest of Education Statistics reports that there are

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7,521,406 enrolled in two-year degree granting institutions in the fall of 2009 (NCES, 2012).

Cost of attendance. Historically, community colleges have been the cost effective gateway to the higher education platform for those who would have otherwise been denied access to such opportunities. Students and parents believe that a higher education can be the key to economic success. Today, "community colleges play an important role in the U.S. economy, providing access to higher education for low-income young people, a path to higher earning employment for low-income workers, and a supply of well-trained employees for local industry (Bailey, Smith & Jenkins, 2001, p. 1)."

While it has never been more important to have a certificate, degree or a credential, it has also never been more expensive. Full-time tuition remained steady at under $100 per year when community colleges began and lasted throughout the 1950s and continued to slowly rise through the early 1980s. By 1987, tuition had nearly doubled to $700 and doubling again in 2000. In 2007, the average annual tuition cost was $2,361 (Cohen, et al., 2008). According to AACC, in the academic year 2007-08, 46 percent of community college students funded their college education with some sort of aid (AACC, 2012). With the rapid pace of rising tuition and fees to acquire a post-secondary education, students have taken on more and more debt. Education is an investment for students and calls for institutions to implement institutional practices and programs to support student persistence toward achieving their goals.

Finance. The necessity of community colleges to increase tuition revenue is a result in a shift from a reliance on local and state aid in their funding formulas.

Historically, property taxes provided the highest portion of income for community colleges; however, the recent economic downturn has impacted this level of funding dramatically. In 1918, public community colleges possessed 94 percent of local funds as income in comparison to 20 percent in the year 2000 (Cohen, et al., 2008). Cohen, et al. (2008) provided for the various funding streams in the year 2000 as: Tuition and fees 20 percent, Federal six percent, State 45 percent, Local 20 percent, Private Gifts one percent, Sales/Service five percent and other 4 percent. This shift and reduction in funding sources has caused community college leaders to make decisions to place the responsibility of balancing institutional budgets on the shoulders of students and their families. Further, institutional leaders are now seeking to implement strategies to assist with budget balancing through improved persistence and graduation rates.

Persistence, transfer, and graduation rates. Community colleges have a variety of mission and vision statements but the common denominator for these institutions is to provide students with an education and learning process that leads to successful completion of their personal goal. In order to fulfill this role, student persistence is crucial. Community college student persistence has remained at less than 50 percent for decades and leaders of these institutions continue to grapple with why students are not successful.

Community colleges play a vital role in transfer preparation to four-year institutions. Mullin (2012) states that 28 percent of bachelor's degree earners started at a community college and 47 percent took at least one course at a community college. Although transfer preparation is an inherent role of the community college it does not go without dispute. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) stated that research has consistently

shown that when a student begins at a community college and are then compared with students with similar characteristics who begin at a four-year institution, the four-year students are more likely to complete a baccalaureate degree. Dougherty (2004) indicated that students who begin at two-year institutions are discouraged from pursuing a baccalaureate degree because they have to transfer to a separate institution with different academic standards. Because of all of this criticism, critics contend that community colleges do not serve those students well who start at the institution and intend to transfer to the four-year institution to complete a four-year degree due to their lack of persistence.

Although persistence, transfer and graduation rates are highly criticized in higher education, community colleges receive the highest criticism. Community colleges are considered to be the access vehicle to higher education with their open access, low cost missions. This mission causes community colleges to serve students with highly diverse backgrounds, needs and academic abilities. As a result of this, today's community colleges serve a larger portion of the underprepared student population through remedial education. Beyond remediation, community college students come with a multitude of other risk factors that contribute to students not completing their education. More importantly, students arrive at the community college with a variety of goals in mind which do not always include the desire to graduate with an associate's degree or transfer to a four-year institution. This results in inaccurate measurement of student persistence and completion data in community colleges.

Institutions have developed an array of intervention strategies to increase persistence, transfer and graduation rates such as first-year experience courses and programs. A large body of literature indicates that first-year courses have a positive

impact on student academic and social integration, acquisition of higher grades and persistence (Porter and Swing, 2006). This study will analyze the curricular impact on student persistence of those who successfully completed a first-year experience course at an urban community college in Michigan. In order to analyze the curricular impact it is important to understand the faculty and student perspectives. The next two sections outline the respective characteristics of both the community college faculty and students.

Characteristics of Community College Faculty

The primary responsibility of community college faculty is to teach, compared to the faculty at most four-year institutions whose emphasis is often conducting and publishing research. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Digest of Education Statistics 2011 report, 78.4 percent of public two-year institution faculty members teach while 43.5 percent of faculty members do so at public four-year research institutions (Snyder and Dillow, 2012).

Knapp, Kelly-Reid and Ginder (2012) reported in a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that there were 407,774 faculty whose roles were primarily instruction in fall 2011 at two-year institutions. This number respectively consisted of 129,676 full-time and 278,098 part-time faculty members (Snyder and Dillow, 2012). Based on the fact that the primary role of community college faculty is to teach, substantiates the importance of incorporating perceptions of both full and part-time faculty into the curriculum of a first-year experience course.

The Digest of Education Statistics (2011) reported that in 2003 the demographics of two-year institution full-time faculty represent 50.5 percent male and 49.5 percent female in 2003 according to NCES. Universities employed more full-time male faculty at

69.9 percent compared with than females who represented 30.1 percent in 2003. The full-time faculty race/ethnicity in 2003 for community colleges was: white 80.9 percent, Black 6.9 percent, Hispanic 5.8 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander 4.2 percent and American Indian/Alaska Native 2.2 percent. These race/ethnicity statistics closely mirror that of a four-year research institution except community colleges employ more full-time Black and Hispanic faculty (Snyder and Dillow, 2012)

Typically community college faculty possesses a Master's degree; however, many in workforce development technical and career training programs possess a lesser degree but typically possess equivalent of occupational work experience. According to Cohen, et al. (2008), 19 percent of community college faculty possessed a doctorate degree, 63 percent a master's degree and 18 percent less than a bachelor's degree in 2003.

Characteristics of the Community College Student

Community college students are distinct and possess unique characteristics in comparison to four-year university students. Students attend community colleges to acquire a certificate or an associate's degree. Some colleges are accredited to offer baccalaureate degrees but that role is primarily held as a responsibility of four-year institutions.

There are seven primary unique characteristics that represent the community college student. These characteristics have changed over time resulting in a shift in the community college student profile. The first distinct characteristic according to Cohen & Brawer (2008) is gender. Historically, more men attended college and it was not until 1978, did the number of women attending community exceed the number of men (Cohen,

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2008). According to a 2009 report produced by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 57 percent of the student population was female and 43 percent male.

The second characteristic is enrollment status. More community college students attend part-time than students at four-year universities. Community college students have competing agendas for their time requiring them to attend college less than full-time. According to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2012) *A Matter of Degrees* report, 59 percent of students attend college part-time while 42 percent of those students work 30 hours or more per week. Further, 37 percent of these part-time students spend eleven or more hours per week caring for dependents. Finally, AACC reports that thirteen percent of community college students are single parents (AACC, 2012).

The third characteristic as identified by Cohen and Brawer (2008) was student ability. Community colleges, due to their open access and affordable tuition, tend to serve the lower half of high school students. According to the CCSSE *A Matter of Degrees* report (2012), 66 percent of students need developmental work in at least one area. Remediation adds time to the rate of student completion. Many developmental students are required to participate in supplemental instruction as well. Additional support services, such as tutoring, may also be required. These additional support programs are scheduled outside of when the course typically meets, placing further demands on students' limited time. Further, according to the American College Testing (ACT) Enrollment Management 2011 Trend report there were more than 1.6 million students of the high school graduating class of 2011 that took the ACT during high school and of those that did seventy-two percent of these students met at least one of the four College

Readiness Benchmarks and 28 percent that meet none of the College Readiness

Benchmarks. The report by ACT states that research shows that these students are less

likely to enroll in college, persist over time or complete a degree program within six

years (ACT, 2012). Community college student ability is not only represented by

underprepared students, but it can also be found in high achieving students. Therefore,

community colleges also seek out high-ability students for participation in honors

programs.

The fourth unique community college student characteristic is ethnic minorities.

Minority representation in community colleges has grown over the past few decades

validating that the open access mission contributes to access for minority students.

According to AACC, the ethnicity of community college students in 2009 was 54 percent

white, 16 percent Hispanic, 14 percent Black, 6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander and 1

percent Native American. Also, of the total community college enrollment, 42 percent of

students are the first generation in their family to attend college (AACC, 2012).

The fifth characteristic is age. According to AACC (2009), the average age of

community college students is 28. However the population is very diverse in age as 39

percent of students are under the age of 21, forty-five percent of students are between the

ages of 22 and 39, and fifteen percent are 40 years or older. Research has shown that age

is a contributing factor of the college experience. Many adult learners struggle to balance

work and family responsibilities hindering them from integrating both socially and

academically into the institution. A 2007 report by the Lumina Foundation states that

"millions of adult students are seeking degrees in a system largely built for – and around

– traditional students" (Pusser, et al., 2007, p. 7). Further complicating matters, many

returning adults must take remedial education before they can begin college level work. The Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) estimated that there are 30-50 million adults with low basic skills and of those approximately three million who enroll in adult basic education programs each year (Spadenberg, 2005).

Persistence is the sixth unique characteristic of community college students. Because of the outside of the classroom priorities students possess, it necessitates that they balance priorities which can result in them leaving college before reaching their intended goals. Community college student persistence and completion rates have remained below fifty percent for several decades. According to the CCSSE, *A Matter of Degrees* report (2012), only forty-five percent of students earn a degree or certificate within six years of beginning college (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2012). Although this rate of completion is low, CCSSE reports that fifty-seven percent of students shared that they plan to complete a certificate program, seventy-nine percent plan to obtain an associate's degree and seventy-three percent want to transfer to a four-year college or university (2012).

The seventh unique characteristic is that these students are often commuters to their higher education destination. By design, most community colleges are considered to be commuter schools, but this does not go without challenges for students. Commuting students as a group seem to be at particular risk for attrition (Noel, et al. 1985). The reasons commuter students may be at particular risk are that there is less commitment to the institution and re-enrolling is more disruptive to their lives. Finally, all students are encountering increased tuition and fees, but the commuter student is also experiencing financial difficulties with transportation costs which can impede their ability to attend

class. According to the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA), the cost of a gallon of regular gasoline in May 2012 is $3.79, which equates to $45.48 for a 12-gallon tank of gas. Commuter students are not only limited in their ability to integrate socially and academically into the institution, they also face additional expenses that residential students do not.

Persistence Theory

For several decades, researchers have tried to understand the factors that lead to academic failure in order to build a systematic method to predict and eliminate it. Numerous theorists have examined issues about what leads to student persistence and success. A seminal work on persistence models began with a connection to the Durkheim (1951) theory of suicide. Summers (2003) stated, "Durkheim essentially established that suicidal tendencies in individuals that were not socially or normatively integrated into their social systems increased (p. 66)."

Summerskill 1962. Summerskill (1962) observed that the definition of attrition rates have been variously defined as the percentage of students lost to a particular division within the college, the college as a whole or the entire educational system (Pantages & Creedon, 1978). Summerskill (1962) also stated that student drop out and non-dropout have been variously defined which creates concern for a study's usefulness to other researchers and institutions. Summerskill reviewed thirty-five attrition studies conducted over a forty-year period from 1913 to 1953. According to Summerskill, "the percentage of students lost over a four-year period has not changed significantly in four decades (Pantages, et al., p. 55)." He further claimed that these studies are criticized as they make no distinction between temporary or permanent withdrawal from college.

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Spady 1970, 1971. Spady (1970) presented a process of college student drop out that paralleled Durkheim's theory of suicide; although it was not as drastic as suicide. Spady (1970) established an interdisciplinary approach between the individual student and the college environment in which the student attributes are exposed to influences, expectations and interactions. In his initial model of student attrition, Spady proposed five independent variables. Four of these variables (grades, intellectual development, normative congruence and friendship support) identified by Spady (1970) inspire the fifth variable of social integration. Spady (1970) indicated that it is the social integration variable that is the link to Durkheim's suicide model as it relates to the necessity of a student to have social systems. However, he stated that the relationship between social integration and dropout is indirect. Two intervening variables of satisfaction and institutional commitment are tangentially linked to the dependent variable of dropout decision in Spady's 1970 model of student attrition. Spady's (1971) revised model is based on the findings of the 1970 study. The revised model was based on a study that tested the utility of the theoretical 1970 Spady model and was conducted on 683 first-year undergraduates at the University of Chicago in 1965. In the 1971 Model, Spady kept true to the original model but added one element. Based on the findings of the 1970 study, Spady noted the importance of relationships and therefore, incorporated structural relations as a condition of friendship support into the 1970 revised model.

Tinto 1975, 1987, 1993. Tinto (1975) connected on the theoretical model proposed by Durkheim (1951) and built on the Spady (1970) model. Tinto believed that student integration into the academic and social life of the college contributes to the degree for which a student stays in college. Tinto contended that multiple variables of

individual background characteristics, initial commitments and interaction with peers and

faculty contribute to a student's integration both socially and academically. Tinto is

believed to be the leader on student attrition and several studies have confirmed his

integration theory (Pascarella & Chapman, 1983). Tinto's 1975 model accounted only for

voluntary departure within a single institution. Therefore, Tinto (1993) himself stated that

it "is not a systems model of departure (p. 112)."

Tinto (1987) in his book *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of

Student Attrition* revised his original theory by incorporating the work of Van Gennep's

(1960), a Dutch anthropologist, who studied the transition from youth to adulthood. Van

Gennep identified three stages of movement as separation, transition, and incorporation.

Tinto extends Van Gennep's stages to the process through which college students

establish membership in the communities of a college or university and it relates to early

student departure (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). Tinto suggested that students do not

know how to navigate the passages of college, resulting in low student persistence.

Tinto (1993) revised his original model by adding "…adjustment, difficulty,

incongruence, isolation, finances, learning, and external obligations or commitments" as

factors impacting student persistence (p.112). Within this revised model Tinto postulated

that there are different levels of departure: individual and institutional. Tinto stated that

intention and commitment are the primary causes individuals to leave college. Intentions

relate to why students chose to go to college as well as why a particular institution. Not

all students attend college with the intention of completing a degree, particularly

community college students. Clarity and specificity of intentions is important to

understand. Tinto found that three out of every four students experience some form of

uncertainty, especially during the first-year. If a student does not come to college with specific intentions and is uncertain, the likelihood they will persist is low. Commitment is the second individual cause for departure. Commitment is defined as the student's motivation or effort toward achieving a goal (Tinto, 1993). Often if students do not start with a goal in mind, a clear commitment to their educational goals or the institution, they will depart before completing.

Tinto provided institutional effects as the second category of student departure. The reasons of adjustment, difficulty, incongruence and isolation are provided within the model. Adjustment refers to ability for a student to get accustomed to the environment and experience. The second institutional reason a student departs, according to Tinto, is difficulty. Increased rigor of college contributes to students choosing to avoid failure by departing without putting forth the effort to meet academic standards. The third reason leading to student departure is in incongruence with the institution. Tinto stated that incongruence means, "individuals perceive themselves at odds with the institution (p. 50)." He further indicated that lack of institutional fit also plays a role with respect to the needs of students, their interests and their preferences. Finally, the role of isolation in student departure is based on the lack of social and academic integration a student encounters at an institution. Research has shown that frequent interaction between faculty and students can lead to increased persistence and success (Tinto, 1993).

Beyond the two levels of individual and institutional, there are two external factors of finance and obligations that impede student persistence. The cost of higher education is expensive and is considered to be one of the primary reasons students choose to begin their college careers at a community college. However, as tuition and fees

continue to rise and financial aid regulations increase, students may not be able to finance their education, resulting in their departure. Community college students have many obligations, which make up the second external factor that has an effect on student persistence. Some students may be working full-time, caring for a dependent, raising a family, etc., which can hinder them from being successful in college. It is important to note that Tinto (1993) indicated that students depart on two levels (individual and institutional); however, decision-making can take place as a result of interplay between both levels in addition to the external factors noted above.

Astin 1984. Alexander Astin has been instrumental in conducting survey research on hundreds of thousands of students to understand why they drop out and what impact cultivation and involvement plays as a predictor of degree completion. Astin theorized that student involvement while attending college has an effect on student success. Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) postulated that in order to retain students the institution must involve students. Astin utilizes the term involvement to imply a student behavior component. At this state in development, Astin's Involvement Theory has five basic postulates:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and physiological energy.

2. Involvement occurs along a continuum.

3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.

4. The amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement.

5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement (p. 298).

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement encouraged educators to focus less on what they do and more on what the student does. Astin strived to bring a deeper understanding for educators and administrators in regards to what motivates a student toward persistence. Astin's theory broadened primary elements that support or impede student involvement to include academic and non-academic policies and practices.

Chickering and Reisser 1993. Arthur W. Chickering is considered a leader in researching human development patterns as it informs policies and practices in higher education that lead to student success. In his early work, Chickering followed Erik Erikson's psychosocial model. Erickson (1959) believed in stages of development beyond childhood and focused on social context. Chickering and Reisser (1993) in the second edition of *Education and Identity* revise the original vectors (1969) and identify The Seven Vectors of Change as:

1. Achieving Competence –utilizing own mind through intellectual, social and physical skills.
2. Managing Emotions - ability to realize, comprehend and manage feelings.
3. Developing Autonomy – ability to be self-sufficient.
4. Establishing Identity – person's competence, maturity, personal appearance and physical needs.
5. Freeing Interpersonal Relationships – ability to develop healthy, mature relationships that provide both an appreciation and open-mindedness of others.
6. Developing Purpose – ability to know where one is going, set, and explore goals.

7. Developing Integrity – student's ability to know right from wrong, establish ethic, moral and value statements and moving away from self-interest to the interest of others.

The authors believed that these seven vectors of student development contribute to students' ability to be successful in college by developing their whole person and not simply their intellectual competence. Further, an individual's vectors can be influenced by a multitude of environmental factors; and therefore, these authors believed that it is institution's responsibility to establish mechanisms such as policy, practice, curriculum, relationships and service to assist with the development of these student vectors.

Pascarella 1980; Pascarella and Chapman 1983; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991.
Pascarella (1980) expanded on Tinto's and Astin's impact models and Chickering's developmental models by developing a student/faculty interaction model. Pascarella (1980) took a position that there are outside factors that influence desirable educational outcomes. His research indicated that there is statistical significance when positive associations exist between student informal, non-class contact with faculty and educational outcomes as satisfaction with college, educational aspirations, intellectual and personal development, academic achievement and freshman to sophomore year persistence in college.

In 1983, Pascarella and Chapman conducted a study on student background characteristics, institutional characteristics, academic and social integration and institutional and goal commitment at four-year residential and commuter institutions as well as two-year commuter institutions to test the validity of Tinto's (1975) framework. The analyses were conducted on 2,326 freshmen from eleven postsecondary institutions.

In general, the results support the predictive validity of the model but suggested that

differences in patterns of influence existed based on institution type. The differences

were identified in social and academic integration type. "Social integration played a

stronger role in influencing persistence at four-year, primarily residential institutions,

while academic integration was more important at two and four-year, primarily commuter

institutions (p. 87)." This test of Tinto's model validated that there are differences

between community college and university students as it relates to freshman year

persistence. It further indicated that the utilization of Tinto's single institution model fall

short in fully understanding the differences of the community college and university

student departure.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) in their book *How College Affects Students* proposed

that interaction with faculty and other institutional experiences impacts the student's

satisfaction with the institution as well as impacts first to second year persistence at the

institution. Pascarella and Terenzini demonstrated that consistent and positive

interactions beyond the classroom with other college members are a prominent predictor

of college persistence. These authors identified other factors that positively correlate with

a student's inability to persist, including; institution size, private versus public institution,

gender, race, undergraduate grades, participation in extracurricular activities, and

participation in orientation.

Bean and Metzner 1985; Bean and Eaton 2001-2002. The Bean and Metzner

(1980) model built on the student attrition process of Spady (1970), Tinto (1975) and

Pascarella (1980) by adding the defining characteristic of non-traditional student social

integration into the institution. Non-traditional students in this model are considered

older, part-time and commuter students. In their model, Bean and Metzner (1985) posit

that there are four set of variables that lead to non-traditional students drop out decisions.

These factors are academic performance, psychological outcomes, background and

defining variables and environmental variables all transcending into a students' intent to

leave. All of these factors directly or indirectly compete with a student's ability to remain

in college.

Bean and Eaton (2001-2002) review a psychological model of student retention. They

identify the foundations of their model, where psychological processes of academic and

social integration are present, as:

1. Attitude behavior theory: linking beliefs and attitudes with behavior.

2. Coping behavior theory: the ability to adjust to or 'fit' with an environment.

3. Self-efficacy theory: an individual's self-perception that they are capable of

    dealing with tasks and achieving desired outcomes.

4. Attribution theory: wherein an individual has a strong sense of internal locus

    of control.

The proposed Bean and Eaton (2001-2002) model suggests that students enter college

with a complex set of characteristics and that during their various interactions with the

institution their psychological state changes. Further, the model posited by Bean and

Eaton (2001-2002) supports the importance of institution provisions for freshman

seminars, learning communities or first-year experience courses to support student

persistence.

Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon 2004. Braxton, Sullivan and Johnson (1997)

coined student departure as the "departure puzzle (p. v)." These authors assessed the

empirical internal consistency of Tinto's theory and found it in need of serious revision. The inductive theory construction conducted by Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon (2004) provided the foundation for the generation of new concepts and revisions of student departure. The revisions involve sixteen propositions, encapsulated into four categories. The categories to mitigate student departure are:

1. Economic: low costs of college attendance.

2. Organizational: student perceives that the institution is committed to the welfare of its students and exhibits integrity.

3. Psychological: a student's motivation to graduate, need for control in their life, belief in own efforts, self-awareness of their actions/decisions and need for affiliation.

4. Sociological: aspects of a student's parent's educational level, support from others for college attendance, participation in learning communities and social engagement.

This theory by Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) was postulated on commuter institutions and may have no general applicability to all students in all institutions.

Many of the various persistence theories outlined above strongly correlate to the implementation of institutional strategies that lead to social and academic integration, high student touch points and assimilation. One such strategy is that of a first-year experience course or program which is outlined in depth in the next section.

First-Year Experience Courses

History. There is great history behind orientation courses in higher education. Upcraft, Gardner & Associates (1989) indicated that the process of orienting new

students to college began early in the history of higher education. By 1930 it was estimated that one-third of colleges and universities offered an orientation course or program and the number of student participants grew to nine out of ten by 1938 (Upcraft, et al., 2005). Boudrea & Kromrey (1994) stated that it was not until the 1970s and 1980s did the use of orientation courses become prevalent. In 2006, approximately 95 percent of four-year institutions in the United States offered such a course (Goodman, 2006).

Not only is there a variety of styles of offering orientation programs there are also numerous types of programs. One such course is a first-year experience course. In their book *Challenging & Supporting The First-Year Student,* Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot and Associates (2005) stated, "most first-year seminars fit into one of five categories: extended orientation seminars, academic seminars with generally uniform content across sections, academic seminars on various topics, professional or discipline-linked seminars, or basic study seminar (p. 279)." Programs may also be targeted for a certain demographic, program or an entire cohort (Montgomery, Jeffs, Schlegel & Jones, 2002). These programs may also be mandatory or offered as an elective course.

First-year experience courses have been part of academic curriculum at American colleges for over 100 years (University of South Carolina [USC], 2012). The most prominent and widely recognized first-year experience effort was South Carolina's University 101 course, introduced in 1972. Gardner (1986) stated that the freshman year experience movement is built on a number of factors including the care of freshman, institutional finances, high school graduates, an aging faculty, declining liberal arts education, freshman as consumers, competition, retention and shifting freshman characteristics and demographics.

Purpose and structure. A majority of colleges and universities offer some form of a first-year experience course created to enhance student academic performance as well as retention and completion rates (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Further, Goodman (2006) shared that the common goal of first-year experience courses is to increase academic performance and persistence through academic and social integration with the long-term goal to increased goal attainment. Typically first-year experience courses are offered to freshman in colleges or universities to help them in their transition from high school to college. Additionally, these courses also focus on guiding students to have a better understanding of themselves. Gardner (1986) indicated that the commonality in first-year experience courses is that they are a "deliberately designed attempt to provide a rite of passage in which students are supported, welcomed, celebrated, and ultimately (hopefully), assimilated (p. 266)."

First-year experience courses can vary in structure from one institution to another and based on the type of institution. These courses can vary greatly from college to college, some operating as a traditional course while others are offered one-time at or before the start of their college career. Not only are they offered as first-year courses, they are also offered in the second and third years of a student's college experience as institutional leaders seek to retain students and improve their success at all levels.

In order to promote student success Yorke and Longden (2004) stated, "a policy focused on student success in higher education through teaching, learning and assessment, and through institutional support services, is likely to lead to better retention than a focus on retention itself (p. 132)." First-year experience courses integrate all facets of this policy spoken of by Yorke and Longden. Tinto (1993) and others have

taken the viewpoint that institutions are likely to maximize their students' chances of

success if they pay particular attention to the first-year experience. Pascarella and

Terenzini (2005) have synthesized and abundant amount of research on first-year

experience courses and found that there is substantial evidence indicating that first-year

experience courses increase persistence from the first to second year of college

(Goodman, 2006).

There are strong indications that guiding students through their collegiate

experience, with the proper support they need, leads to student success. Levitz, Noel &

Richter (1999) described:

> Getting students started right on the path through the institution to graduation
> begins with anticipating and meeting their transition and adjustment needs when
> they enter. Freshmen need a prevention plan. Intrusive, proactive strategies must
> be used to reach freshman before the students have an opportunity to experience
> the feelings of failure, disappointment, and confusion (p. 39).

Barefoot (2000) expressed that students today are far different than when their

faculty attended their undergraduate programs. She stated that the differences lie in

"demographic, personal, academic, and social analysis (p. 13)." Barefoot (2000) further

indicated that today's students seriously lack institutional fit, but not of their own doing.

Mechur-Karp (2011) further stated, "college success requires more than the ability to

master college-level academic skills. Students must learn to navigate an unfamiliar

campus, satisfy bureaucratic requirements and meet new expectations (p. 1)." Therefore,

it is obligatory of institutional leaders to develop processes and courses that help guide

students to success as students do not know what they do not know. To navigate college,

students need to develop college know-how and the social norms of the postsecondary

environment; student success courses may be a useful and timely vehicle to accomplish this (Mechur-Karp, 2011).

Yorke, et al. (2004) shared that Kuh warns against the power of institutional culture to influence academic outcomes by stating that when there is a diverse student body, some groups will more likely be comfortable with the institution than others. Culture plays a large role in acclimating students to overcome incongruence as noted by Tinto (1975, 1993) in order to gain institutional fit and social integration. There are also sub-cultures that are present in academic departments that influence students. Maneuvering the culture and the systems within higher education can be a stumbling block for students; they must be taught how to properly manage themselves within this new environment.

Because community college students are typically commuter students, they lack the time to socially and academically integrate into the institution resulting in a need for this connection to be made within the classroom. The most important element to social and academic integration as noted by Tinto (1975, 1987, and 1993), Pantages and Creedon (1978), Pascarella (1980) and Chickering (1993) is relationships. However, it is not only classroom engagement that matters to the developmental character of students, it is also resides within all areas of the college setting. Kuh, Schuh, Whitt & Associates (1991) speak to the necessity of creating environments that bring together classroom and out-of-classroom experiences. In this regard, Kuh (1993, 1995) has proven that out-of-classroom experiences contribute to student development and learning.

Curriculum. "Curriculum – its design and implementation – is a fundamental component of a college's commitment to holistic student development (Braskamp,

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Tautvetter and Ward, 2008, p. 28)." Further, it is the curriculum that is considered to be

the most important part of the sociocultural environment that helps guide a student to

meet the desired learning outcomes and developmental goals (Braskamp, et al., 2008).

Braxton (2000) espoused that curriculum structure and pedagogy invariably shape

both student learning and persistence. The multifaceted curriculum of a first-year

experience course again is designed to guide a student through the transition process from

high school to college. There are several approaches to first-year experience course

curriculum that have developed over time, beginning with learning strategies model

introduced by John Gardner at the University of South Carolina in 1972. This model

"typically included instruction on study skills, textbook-reading skills, time management,

note taking and test skills (Montgomery, et al., p. 60)." These authors stated that that

these courses later included "metacognitive and self-regulation skills (p. 60)." In addition,

these courses are designed to integrate the student both socially and academically into the

institution with a desired result of persistence. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) observed

that first-year experience courses vary greatly including frequency, duration and class

meeting times, content, pedagogy and structure; credit hours and grading; and whether

the course was an elective. However, the element most common to first-year experience

course is that they have a regularly scheduled meeting time with a specific instructor and

are intended for new students.

The objectives of the curriculum vary by course and institution type. According to

the National Resource Center (2003), 63.5 percent of all institutions with first-year

experience course indicated development of academic skills as a top course objective

(National Resource Center [NRC], 2004). Upcraft, et al. (2005) indicated that another

objective at the top of the list is "a commitment to easing the transition to college," which has been one of the top areas of student persistence and success research (p. 283)." Gardner (1986) shared that the goals of the University 101 course at the University of South Carolina are to promote persistence as a derivative of accomplishing things such as extended orientation, survival skills, mentorship programs, career counseling, student life, develop students as consumers, diversity and culture. Other objectives of first-year experience course as noted by the National Resource Center (2002) are: career planning, development of critical thinking and study skills, orienting students to campus resources, policies and organizations, enhancing student-faculty and student-student interactions, personal growth and development and health education.

Instruction. The pedagogical approach to a first-year course is unique. Upcraft, et al. (2005) stated:

Since the content for first–year seminars is student centered, effective instruction in first-year seminars usually deviates from the traditional lecture format. The very name seminar implies an active learning process, where teaching and learning functions are shared by the instructors and the students. Therefore, instructors must relinquish some of the traditional authority and control associated with teaching. Active learning strategies may include experiential learning techniques, collaborative learning, group projects, and oral presentations (p. 285).

Gordon (1989) reported, "Many orientation courses are taught by student personnel staff, academic advisors, administrators, or other professional staff" and "faculty may be assigned to teach the course (p. 192)." Upcraft, et al. (2005) stated that it is not typical for first-year experience courses to employ full-time faculty positions. If

full-time faculty members do teach the course, they typically reside in other departments on campus. Upcraft, et al. (2005) further stated that more than any other academic course, first-year experience courses are taught by student affairs professionals and college administrators. Finally, team teaching is a highly utilized approach for first-year seminars as well. Upcraft, et al. (2005) reports that 33 percent of campuses responding to the National Resource Center survey stated that the seminar is taught by teaching teams.

Because of the unique approach of these courses, it must be understood that not all faculty will be effective in their teaching of this type of course. Therefore, it is necessary for academic administrators whose responsibility is to assign courses to faculty properly recruit, select and orient faculty charged with teaching first-year experience courses. The National Resource Center (2002) indicated that data from the 2000 National Survey of First-Year Seminar Programming indicate that 48 percent of institutions require instructor training prior to teaching a first-year seminar. Further, 76 percent of responding institutions offer professional development training to faculty (NRC, 2004).

Assessment. Regional accrediting bodies evaluate an entire educational institution in terms of its mission and accredit the institution as a whole (Higher Learning Commission [HLC], 2012). Accreditation can also be program specific. The overarching responsibility of an accrediting body is to identify and measure specific academic outcomes to provide public certification to assure acceptable institutional quality for academic and support programs (HLC, 2012). The accreditation process also provides an opportunity for self-evaluation for academic and support program improvement.

The purpose of academic assessment is to improve practice and enhance curriculum. Upcraft, et al. (2005) stated that first-year experience courses are challenged

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by some constituents who believe that they are not real courses, which results in the continual search for evidence to support the positive impact these courses make on both the students and the institution itself. Further, the authors stated that some may argue first-year experience courses are perhaps the most assessed and measured of all undergraduate curricular interventions.

The curricular assessment process allows for a structured analysis to determine the extent of intended learning through learning outcomes. Andrade (2008) indicated that the idea of assessing the effectiveness of first-year programming is well supported. The author further stated that common assessment measures of first-year experience courses include persistence to the second year and graduation rate, involvement with peers and professors, participation in campus activities, use of support services, satisfaction with the institution and with faculty, improved academic abilities and grade point average.

Cuseo (n.d.), in *Assessment of the First-Year Experience: Six Significant Questions,* stated that "FYE assessment efforts may have to be more intentionally designed for summative purposes in order to generate the type of value-added evidence that will support their program adoption and survival (Cuseo, n.d.)." Barefoot (2000) supported the purpose of Cuseo's model in order to validate the importance of first-year experience course assessment. Barefoot (2000) further stated that first-year experience courses are "a continuous battle for status within the academy…never becoming a central, sustainable part of the institution's fabric. In addition, "First-year programs often have a single champion rather than a broad-based institutional support and operate with a minimal budget or no budget (p. 17)." However, it is through assessment outcomes that

resource allocations, a heightened focus on program needs as well as purpose validation are realized.

     Evidence of the effectiveness. It was not until the early 1980s when the majority of the research on orientation courses began with a purpose to determine if any relationships existed between course completion and student retention and/or academic achievement (Boudreau, et al., 1994). Today, there is an abundant amount of research that has been conducted to prove the positive impact first-year experience courses have on student persistence and success.

     Gardner (1986) provided a study over a twelve-year period of those who participated in the University of South Carolina's University 101 freshman seminar course. This study noted that over a twelve-year period students who participated in the course had a higher rate of persistence than students than those that did not participate in the course. In addition, high-risk students participating in the University 101 program had higher retention rates than students who were not high risk of pursuing degree (Gardner, 1986).

     Boudrea and Kromrey (1994) outlined a longitudinal study of the persistence, academic performance and graduation rates of participants of a freshman orientation course that was conducted at the University of South Florida. The total sample of the study consisted of 1,286 first-time college students who enrolled during consecutive fall semesters from 1987 through 1990. The results of the study concluded that the persistence rates were significantly higher for two of the four cohorts. Academic achievement was significantly better than that of non-participants for one cohort and a higher grade point average as well as amount the total number of credits completed.

Graduation rates were slightly higher but not statistically significant based on the total

number of graduates being small within four years of the beginning semester of the first

cohort.

Schnell, et al. (2003) conducted a study of 1,700 students to determine whether

college graduation rates of entering students enrolled in a first-year experience course

during academic years 1991 through 1994 at a public midwestern university significantly

differed from those that did not enroll in the seminar. The longitudinal study found that

students who enrolled in the first-year experience course graduated at a higher rate than

those that did not enroll.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) synthesized more than forty additional studies on

first-year experience course participants and found that they are more likely to graduate

within four years than nonparticipants. These students were more likely to graduate at a

rate of five to fifteen percentage points greater than those who did not take the seminar.

Another study they conducted was based on random assignment of students to first-year

seminars, found that re-enrollment for the second year of college was thirteen percentage

points higher for the seminar participants (Goodman, 2006).

A more recent and larger scale study was conducted by the Community College

Research Center using data from all 28 Florida community colleges (Zeidenberg, Jenkins,

& Calcagno, 2007). This study tracked a cohort of students over seventeen terms and

compared students who participated in a student success course (known as Student Life

Skills, or SLS) with those who did not participate. The study found that students who

were enrolled in SLS were more likely to be successful over a given time period, as

measured by credential completion, persistence in the college, and transfer to a four-year in the Florida State University system.

Cho and Mechur-Karp (2012) took the Florida study one step further to analyze students who took the course early in their college careers as well as the relationship between developmental placement and student success course enrollment at the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). There were 14,807 students who enrolled in three of the student success courses that were part of the study. Of this number, 9,517 or 62 percent were enrolled in developmental education courses. "Being enrolled in a student success course has a positive and statistically significant association with all three of our outcomes (p. 11)." Students enrolled in a student success course persisted by ten percent more into the second year than those who did not. There is evidence that students who tested to even the lowest levels of developmental math were more likely to earn credits, college-level credits in particular, within the first-year if they enrolled in a student success course their first term. Further, these same students were more likely to persist into their second year.

Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of what makes community colleges and their faculty and students unique as well as a literature review of various persistence theories, first-year experience courses, instruction, curriculum and assessment. The chapter concluded with an abundant amount of research proving the relevance of first-year seminars as it relates to persistence and student success.

While first-year experience courses have been at the forefront of an abundant amount of literature, it typically was founded in a four-year setting with four-year

institution students. The research that has been conducted on first-year experience curriculum lacks the input of faculty and students who have experienced it. Further research is needed to determine what critical curricular components lead to community college student success, especially in community college settings.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology that attempted to answer the research questions of this study as outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter will provide detail about the population and sample, institutional review board approval, data collection and instrumentation, and data analysis of this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher provides the rationale for this qualitative study as well as the research setting, population, methodology, data collection and analysis that were utilized. The study is based on the concepts of persistence theories that can be incorporated into college success programs, particularly first-year experience courses.

Although extensive research has been conducted on attrition, persistence and various orientation programs, a better understanding of why first-year experience programs or courses are beneficial in retaining students is necessary to inform college faculty and administration. Andrade (2007) stated that further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of first-year programs.

Qualitative Approach

This study employed qualitative research methods of focus group interviews with both students and faculty as well as document analysis with a purpose of gaining an understanding of the benefits of a first-year experience course at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) as it relates to student success, or persistence.

The use of the single case study of GRCC allowed for data to be unearthed with the potential to inform decisions to be made by these institutional leaders and faculty. According to Schramm (1971), "the essence of a case study…, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (as cited by Yin with emphasis added, 2009, p. 17)." Case study research allowed for those who had experience with the issue to make comment on their perceptions. Yin (2009) stated that there are four applications to utilize case studies as evaluative research, they are:

1. To explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.

2. To describe an intervention and real-life context in which it occurred.

3. To illustrate certain topics within an evaluation, in descriptive mode.

4. To enlighten those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (p. 19-20).

The primary methods of research were focus group interviews and syllabi review. Since the study analyzed mainly a community college course it is important to bring in information from individuals that have had exposure to and experience with the course. The use of focus group interviews allowed the researcher to collect data on a topic from a group of people who have knowledge and experience of the topic (Merriam, 2009). This study analyzed the curricular perceptions of new and experienced students' who have successfully completed a first-year experience course and had persisted. Additional perceptions were acquired through faculty interviews with those who have taught the first-year experience course, CLS100 at GRCC. Merriam (2009) stated that focus groups

are best when the participants do not typically have the opportunity to converse about a topic. Through the gathering of students and faculty to participate in the focus groups for this study, a deeper understanding around experiences, perceptions and attitudes was gained. This type of meaning is not acquired through quantitative methodology.

Institutions have a responsibility to assess curriculum and student outcomes. Andrade (2008) indicated that monitoring or assessing students involves "data collection, examining program components and student learning (p. 486)." This study is significant as it allowed for student and faculty perceptions to be evaluated against the stated learning course outcomes toward making curricular changes or enhancements that lead to improved student success. In his overview of research into higher education, Tight (2004) refers to Silver and Silver's observation on the scarceness of research that treats people as 'real people' (1997). Having entered the voices of relevant students and faculty into this study, powerful curricular changes could be made to increase institutional persistence and graduation rates. Further, by reviewing documents as evidence, the researcher was able to uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research study (Merriam, 2009).

Acquiring a deeper understanding of the topics perceived as most important by both students and faculty will benefit college administrators and faculty in enhancing the current curriculum as well as provide insight to determine if such a course should be mandatory for all entering first-time students to enhance persistence and completion rates at GRCC.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to acquire student and faculty perceptions on the curriculum of a first-year experience course, College Learning Studies (CLS100) that contributed to student persistence by a single institution, GRCC. This study was conducted on new and experienced students who successfully completed CLS100. The definitions of new and experienced students are clarified as follows:

New Student- Students who took the first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted the next semester. The "new" students in this study are first-time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 fall 2012 and persisted to winter 2013.

Experienced Student- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted for one or more years. The "experienced" students are first-time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 in the fall 2011 (or before) semester and persisted to fall 2012.

As with any course, the approved course learning outcomes should be embedded into the curriculum of the CLS100 course. Therefore, the research questions and methodology for this study were developed to acquire the perspective from study participants to view the relevance to student persistence.

Finally, this study sought to understand the perception of the faculty that taught the course to determine if curricular changes should be made to enhance persistence rates. By acquiring deeper knowledge of how both students and faculty interpreted their experiences and attitude with CLS100 curriculum, this study contributed to the richness of understanding the beliefs of what precipitated student persistence as it related to this course. According to Zeidenberg, et al. (2007) "Despite the prevalence of [student

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success] courses at community colleges, little research has been conducted on their effectiveness (p. 1)."

Research Questions

The design of this study was predicated on one central question: What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced student's persistence at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC)? Sub questions for the study were:

1. Are there differences in the perceptions of new and experienced students about what topics taught in CLS100 curriculum contributed toward their ability to persist?

2. How do students and faculty differ in their perceptions of the topics of the CLS100 curriculum that contribute toward student persistence?

3. What do faculty and students perceive to be present in the CLS100 curriculum that make it less meaningful?

4. What do faculty and students perceive to be missing in the CLS100 curriculum to make it more meaningful?

Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

Crotty (1998) defined epistemology as, "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology (p. 3)." This was a qualitative study to determine the perceptions and meaningfulness of community college students and faculty related to their involvement in a first-year experience course. Constructivism is a highly regarded epistemology in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). By utilizing Constructivism as an epistemology provided the basis for knowledge assertions in this

study since it attempted to understand the perceptions of both students and faculty with the first-year experience course curriculum as it contributed to student success and persistence.

According to Merriam (2009), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (p. 13)." Through the constructivist lens of gathering knowledge of perceptions of those who have experienced this course, a deeper understanding of the essences of course curriculum that are associated with student persistence would be revealed.

Crotty (1998) stated that Constructivism is the process for which individuals construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Through focus groups participants were able to construct meaning through social interaction with each other. It is through this social interaction comes a deeper and richer meaning to these individuals reality of their CLS100 curriculum experience.

Inherent in qualitative research is the desire to discover meaning of a phenomenon for those involved and is highly regarded in the field of education (Merriam, 2009). By using case study in this research, it provided for continuous comparisons to be made between students and faculty perceptions through personal experience with the course curriculum, which allowed for grounded theory framework to be constructed. Merriam (2009) stated that through grounded theory the researcher, as the primary investigator, is able to construct a theory grounded in data. It is through the inductive analysis when meaning is derived (Merriam, 2009).

Institution and Course Background

        Selection of the Institution. The institution selected for this study was purposeful and based on willingness to participate in the study as well as convenience of proximity, time and cost for the researcher. This single case study was conducted at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), a two-year college. GRCC is one of 28 community colleges in the State of Michigan and was founded in 1914 as Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC) (Grand Rapids Community College [GRCC], 2012). GRCC offers certificate and associate's degrees as well as non-credit programming. The main campus of the institution is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There is no on-campus residence, so GRCC is considered a non-residential commuter college.

        Academic Structure. The academic structure at GRCC includes a Provost/Executive Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs with four schools inclusive of Arts and Sciences, Interdisciplinary Studies, Student Affairs and Workforce Development. Each school possesses a Dean and Associate Deans. The Schools of Arts & Sciences and Workforce Development both have an Associate Dean of Operations as well as Associate Dean of Faculty Hiring & Evaluation. The School of Interdisciplinary Studies has one Associate Dean and the School of Student Affairs has one Associate Dean of Counseling, Advising & Retention Services.

        According to the ACT 2010 Report 59.5 percent of institutions indicated they have a person responsible for persistence and that is typically Chief Student Affairs Officer/Dean. The Provost, Dean and Associate Dean in Student Affairs are primarily responsible for persistence and student success at GRCC.

        Further ACT stated that 53 percent of community colleges reported that they do not have a specific first-year to second-year retention goal (ACT 2010 Report on

Community Colleges-What Works in Student Retention). GRCC has a goal of increasing

student success through a variety of college action projects as well as department-level

projects. However, there is no specified target stated for the desired increase in student

persistence, graduation and transfer rates.

Enrollment. GRCC's enrollment in the fall 2011 semester credit-seeking students

was 17,601, down for the first time in four years (GRCC Fall 2011 Enrollment Report).

Adding non-credit students, the total enrollment would increase to 33,580. Part-time

(fewer than twelve credits) attendance represented 61.7 percent and full-time (more than

twelve credits) at 38.3 percent for fall 2011 semester.

Student Demographics. During the fall 2011 semester, 52.7 percent of students

were female and 47.3 percent were male. The average age of students is 25.7 years old.

Student ethnicity at GRCC is comprised of 13.9 percent African American, 0.9 percent

Native American, 2.8 percent Asian, 7.5 percent Hispanic and 70.2 percent white.

Mission and Ends Statements. The mission statement at GRCC reads "GRCC is

an open access college that prepares individuals to attain their goals and contribute to the

community" (GRCC, 2012). GRCC works to achieve these Ends that reflect their stated

values.

- Access – GRCC minimizes the barriers of time, place, cost, and educational
  preparation levels so that all members of the community have an opportunity to
  participate in college programs.
- Academic Alignment – GRCC collaborates closely with other educational
  providers to provide a seamless transition across all educational sectors.
- Student Success – GRCC students achieve their educational goals.

- Workforce Development - GRCC students are prepared to secure employment in all sectors of the economy.

- The GRCC Experience – GRCC provides students with co-curricular experiences that help them develop their citizenship skills.

- Community Outreach – GRCC enriches the community through educational and civic programming and partnerships.

Accreditation. GRCC has been accredited continuously since 1917 by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA)**.** Through AQIP's continuous improvement approach to accreditation, GRCC participates based on quality principles, values, and tools through designated projects (GRCC, 2012).

The Faculty

General. GRCC employs nearly 250 full-time and 700 part-time (or adjunct) instructional faculty members. Over 87 percent of GRCC's full-time faculty holds a M.A. or Ph.D. degrees (GRCC, 2012).

CLS100 Faculty. Approximately three full-time and fourteen part-time faculty members taught the first-year experience course (CLS100) at GRCC during the fall 2011 semester, while two full-time and three part-time faculty members taught the course during the winter 2012 semester.

Faculty members must possess a master's degree or higher and are required to attend a four-hour orientation prior to being selected to teach CLS100. Exceptions can be made on the orientation attendance if one has taught a similar course at another

institution. The content of the orientation consists of presentation by Constance Staley in 2009 on "Raising the Bar: Lower Expectations and Higher Learning," overview of instructor support materials, presentation on service learning in CLS100, faculty experts sharing what works or does not work in CLS100, discussion of syllabus, course requirements as well as technical overview of learning management software. Each participant received a CLS100 Instructor Manual comprised of information on the CLS100 course, first-year student characteristics, GRCC frequently asked questions, a section dedicated to activities, exercises and icebreakers and ends with appropriate ways to bring closure to the CLS100 class. Further, a Blackboard instructional resource site has been developed that houses CLS100 syllabus template, course documents, ice breakers, content expert speakers, course requirements and frequently asked questions. The site also provides a mechanism for information sharing amongst faculty.

The Course

GRCC began offering College Learning Studies: New Student Experience (CLS100) in the fall semester of the 2008-2009 academic year. CLS100 is an elective course worth two-credit hours and possesses a requirement of having earned less than eighteen college credits. The typical format of the fifteen-week semester course is to meet one time per week for two hours. However, it has been piloted to offer ten-week sessions with a meeting pattern of two times per week for one and a half hours. The course transfers to other institutions as college credit. The course catalog description is as follows (GRCC 2011-12 Catalog):

This course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity (p.138).

The textbook utilized for this course is specifically focused on community college students and their success. The textbook is titled *Focus on Community College Success* (2nd edition) and is authored by Dr. Constance Staley, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. The text explores the critical issues that contribute toward college success both inside and outside the classroom. Chapters within the text include topics of: getting the right start, setting goals, learning styles, time and energy management, thinking creatively and critically, technology and information literacy skills, engagement in class, memory development, study skills, test taking, building relationships, college major and career planning.

The student learning outcomes for CLS100 as stated on the approved official course outline, and located in Appendix I, are:

1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

These learning outcomes are a critical part of the methodology of this study. The approved course learning outcomes will be cross referenced against the student and faculty perceptions of the primary elements of the CLS100 course curriculum that led to student success to determine if they are connected to student persistence.

Successful completion of this course equates to receiving a letter grade of C- or higher. The institutional assessment of the course indicates that students who successfully completed CLS100 should have a higher fall-to-fall persistence rate as well as a higher cumulative GPA than students who had not taken the course.

Population and Sample

"Sampling involves selecting a small group from a larger group and studying the small group (the sample) in order to learn about the large group (the population) (Vogt, 2007, p. 77)." For the purpose of this case study a non-probability purposeful sample is

utilized. Merriam (2009) stated, "The use of a non-probability purposeful sample is best when you have established criterion relevant to the study that allow for discovery, understanding, implications and linking of occurrence (p. 77)."

Students. This study was conducted on new and experienced students who enrolled and successfully completed CLS100 at GRCC and persisted. Definition of new and experienced students:

- *New Student*- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted the next semester. In this study, one semester is fall 2012 to winter 2013.

- *Experienced Student*- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted for one or more years. In this study, the timeline is course completion fall 2011 or any semester prior to.

Potential participants were identified through a report from GRCC's student database, which provided demographic data of students who took CLS100 in fall 2012 (new student) and persisted to winter 2013. Further, students who took CLS100 on or before the fall 2011 semester (experienced student) and persisted to fall 2012 were identified. The participants were invited via email (Appendix A). These students meet the selection-based criterion for the study as represented by the entire student population. Upon notification of voluntary participation, a comprehensive email was provided to the participant (Appendix B).

The respondent population was then analyzed to allow for diverse representation of age, race and gender of the participants. The necessary data was provided in the report identifying potential participants and will be crossed referenced to compile a diverse

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interview pool. The respondent pool was not deemed diverse or sufficient, therefore a second email request to participate was sent. The demographics of the student focus group are important to collect data from individuals who are representing a broad range of ideas (Merriam, 2009). A diverse focus group brings richness to the study by allowing for a variety of perspectives to be represented within the data being collected

The timeframe for student participant selection were new students who term to term persisted (fall 2012 to winter 2013) and experienced students who year to year persisted (fall 2011 to fall 2012 or before) post their successful completion of CLS100.

Faculty. Faculty members who have taught CLS100 were emailed requesting their voluntary participation in the study (Appendix C). The respondent population was then analyzed to allow for representation from both full-time and part-time faculty. It is important to have part-time and full-time faculty perceptions in this study since they both have significant interactions and impact on the student success at this institution.

The sample size for this study, as detailed in Table 1, is as follows:

Table 1

Demographics of Focus Groups

Demographics	New Students	Experienced Students	Faculty
Total Participants	8	7	8
Male	4	4	2
Female	4	3	6
Caucasian	7	6	5
Black	1	1	3
Hispanic	0	0	0
Asian	0	0	0
Unknown Ethnicity	0	0	0
Part-time Faculty			6
Full-time Faculty			2

Institutional Review Board Approval

Approval to conduct this study was acquired through the Institutional Review

Board of Ferris State University and GRCC prior to conducting the study. Participants

were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix D). The consent form provided the

participants with details regarding the study, the researcher, contact information and

withdrawal process. Participants were informed of the withdrawal process and zero

withdrew from the study. These consent forms are maintained with the researcher in a

locked file cabinet along with all other related study documents.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

This qualitative study employed data collection through focus group interviews. The design phase of a study encompasses the method to collect evidence that addresses the question of the study (Vogt, 2007). The importance of utilizing qualitative measures with a constructivist approach in this study derived the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of students and faculty that have had direct interaction with the CLS100 curriculum. Vogt (2007) stated, "any discussion of cause inherently makes a study qualitative in nature (p. 8)." This study seeks to understand what in the CLS100 curriculum that caused students to persist at GRCC through the voice of those who had personal experience with the course. The main purpose of an interview was to obtain "what is in and on someone's mind (Patton, 2002, p. 341)." Through hearing the voice of students and faculty allowed for their perspectives to be exposed around the meaningfulness of the CLS100 curriculum, as well as what was lacking in the curriculum to create that meaningful experience that led to student persistence.

Focus Group Interviews

Interview Questions. This study used focus group interviews to gather data. Patton (2002) indicated that there are six types of interview questions to solicit responses from interviewees:

1. Experience and behavior questions – seek to discover things a person did or did not do, his or her behaviors or activities.

2. Opinion and values questions – researcher seeks to understand a person's beliefs or opinions about a topic.

3. Feeling questions – these questions "tap the affective dimension of human life" to uncover adjective responses like happy, afraid, anxious, intimidated, confident, etc.

4. Knowledge questions – seeks factual participant information or knowledge about a topic or situation

5. Sensory questions – similar to experience and behavior but delve deeper to discover data related to what was seen, touched, heard or felt.

6. Background/demographic questions – these types of questions seek to learn personal information about interviewees such as age, income, etc.

The questions utilized during the focus group interviews integrated all of the six types of questions throughout the interview process. Considering the aspects of a constructivist approach to capturing the meaningfulness of the CLS100 curriculum from the participants, the focus group interview questions were intentionally created and presented to the participants in a semi-structured yes/no; open ended or leading question format. The student focus group interview questions are listed in Appendix E.

The questions utilized for the faculty focus group interviews also integrate the six types of questions as outlined above. The interview questions are presented to the participants in a semi-structured yes/no, open ended or leading question format. The interview questions utilized during the faculty focus groups are listed in Appendix F.

The interview questions utilized for both students and faculty are steeped in theory research on persistence and student success but also developed based on experience with the course curriculum and delivery systems. In addition, these questions were created as a

mechanism to cross compare the responses to the established learning outcomes of CLS100.

Structure of Focus Group Interviews. The focus group interviews were held with voluntary participants. Each participant is asked to complete the consent form at check-in. The researcher was the facilitator for these interviews. Allowing for the presence of the researcher, as facilitator, allows for observation of participant non-verbal communications that can be captured through researcher journaling that may not be necessarily presented in the narrative. All focus group interviews were held in an informal but professional setting on the campus of GRCC. The timing of the interviews was selected based on when the largest number of respondents were able to attend.

The interviews were designed to be informal but professional. Some structure was needed in the development of the interview questions in order to derive information relevant to the research questions and related literature. The researcher opened the interviews with a welcome to the participants as well as an introduction of the purpose of the study before beginning the process utilizing open ended questions. All interviews were digitally recorded and professional transcribed. All participants were provided food and beverage but were not financially compensated for participation.

One would assume that the college-level students are able to contribute toward curricular decisions through their experiences and interactions with the curriculum. Therefore, focus group interviews were held with students; two with new students and three with experienced students.

New Students. The first group interviewed is titled "new students" and are those that had characteristics of successful completion in CLS100 during the fall 2012 semester

and re-enrolled at GRCC in the winter 2013 semester. The location of the focus group interviews were in room 336 and 350 of the Student Center on GRCC's Main Campus. Each interview ranged from thirty minutes to one hour.

Experienced Students. The second student group interviewed is titled the "experienced students" and is those who had successfully completed CLS100 during the fall 2011 semester (or before) and remained enrolled at GRCC in the fall 2012 semester. These focus group interviews took place in room 336 and 350 of the Student Center on GRCC's Main Campus as well as one focus group held at GRCC's Lakeshore Campus, room 101 of the Thompson MTEC facility. Each interview ranged from thirty minutes to one hour.

Faculty. The third focus group interviews were held with both part-time and full-time faculty who have taught CLS100 at GRCC and remain in good standing with the institution as a viable instructor for future courses. These focus groups were held in room 226 of the Administration Building at the Main Campus of GRCC and room 101 of the Thompson MTEC facility of the Lakeshore Campus of GRCC.

Document Analysis

In addition to the aforementioned focus group interviews, course documents were analyzed. Documents are a good and stable source of data as they provide descriptive information, emerging themes and historical perspective (Merriam, 2009). The documents analyzed in this study included CLS100 syllabi. These documents were reviewed to discover if and how the learning outcomes for the CLS100 course were identified and then cross referenced against the research findings to determine if these learning outcomes have bearing or relevance on student persistence. A course syllabus is

a contract between the faculty and student; therefore, it is incumbent upon the faculty to place these clearly written learning outcomes in their syllabi.

Other Data Collection

1. Researcher journaling was conducted throughout the data collection phase of the study.

2. Observation comments were recorded while conducting all focus group interviews.

Data Analysis

Each focus group interview was recorded. After each focus group, the recorder was provided to a third party professional transcriber. Each focus group discussion was transcribed verbatim. Prior to beginning transcription, a sample was provided to the hired transcriber to demonstrate format and to assure understanding of uniformity.

Qualitative data analysis was deployed to analyze the transcripts of the focus group interviews through an inductive and comparative process. The constant comparative methods proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) were the primary focus for the initial comparative process to seek out themes found in the data to attempt to find answers to the research questions posed for this study (Merriam, 2009). This process allowed for the reading, rereading and development of an initial code list to begin the preparation and organization of the data. By continually comparing units of information "recurring regularities in the data" are discovered, deriving in themes (Merriam, p. 177). Further, step four of Creswell's (2003) approach to data analysis allowed for the

development of the theoretical grounded theory model. Step four entailed coding for a deeper review to identify major themes and complex theme analysis.

The researcher being present for the focus group interviews provides a depth and insight to the study through experiencing the data. Repeated review of the transcripts as well as researcher journals allowed the researcher a fuller understanding of the conversations that took place at the interviews, which began the category construction as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). "Category construction takes place as the researcher reads and makes notations or comments that relate to the study or help answer the research questions resulting in open coding (Merriam, 2009, p. 178)." Once the open coding was completed, axial coding took place. Axial coding as defined by Merriam (2009) is "The process of grouping your open codes (p. 180)." Through line by line analysis the researcher was able to identify key words or phrases that were identified by transcript code line for retrieval purposes.

The process of coding data took place as a means to develop grounded theory. Creswell (2003) defined grounded theory as the process in which "the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants in the study (p. 14)." Further Merriam (2009) stated, "a grounded theory study seeks not just to understand, but also to build a substantive theory about the phenomenon of interest (p. 23)." Interactive interviews allow for a descriptive analysis through excerpts from audiotapes, researcher journal and quotes from documents (Merriam, 2009). This study utilized verbal descriptions in written form to vividly depict the perceptions of the participants through their experience in or with the CLS100 curriculum.

Validity and Reliability

Throughout this data collection step of the study it was assured that the project was valid and reliable. To increase internal validity and reliability data triangulation is employed. Triangulation can be defined as a study that uses multiple sources of data to compare and cross-check data collection. Through this approach there is opportunity for connections and linkages to be identified. Further, triangulation increases internal validity and reliability, of the study (Merriam, 2009). The following, Figure 1, is a visual depiction of the data methods utilized in this studies triangulation process.
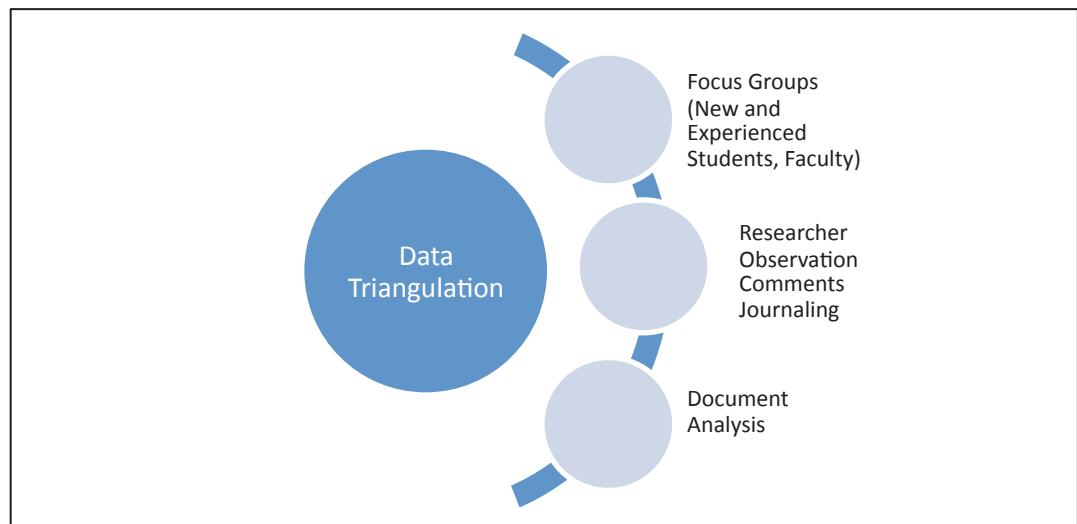
Figure 1: Data Triangulation

To further ensure internal validity cross validation of the data was utilized. This comparative analysis looked for themes or trends in each student interview but also between the student groups as well as against the faculty interviews. Interview questions were examined by a colleague to ensure that they support the research question and sub questions. The research for this study was conducted as qualitative methodology; therefore, the burden of proof lies with the researcher to be assured that the data was

valid and reliable. Through the use of a variety of qualitative methods in this study, the researcher was able to remove any biases that could be found in a study utilizing only one method. A solid audit trail assured a clear, understandable and traceable log of people, places, tools and processes utilized in the data collection.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the setting, design, population and sample, data collection and data analysis methodology utilized in this study. A series of focus group interviews and document analysis was conducted at one community college the researcher provided the data as they it relates to the effectiveness of a first-year experience course curriculum on student persistence.

The focus group interviews with faculty and students derived the perceptions of the curriculum as it relates to student success through persistence. By examining these perceptions and related documents, necessary curricular changes can be made to the first-year experience course to enhance persistence and success rates at GRCC.

The final purpose of the study was to inform college administrators and faculty through qualitative methodology to bring in the voice of the students and faculty. The data acquired in this study further advances the institutional data currently received through faculty and student end of the course surveys. As the institution determines the necessity of mandating CLS100 for incoming freshman, this study enhances what is already known through surveys but possibly not understood without hearing the voice of the customers through the utilization of the curriculum.

The next chapter will provide a post-prospectus methodology including the execution of the study, organization of the data analysis and the descriptive characteristics of participants.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Background

The purpose of this research study was to explore the student and faculty perceptions of what aspects of a first-year experience course curriculum led to student persistence at GRCC. It is the expectation that these findings will benefit college administrators and faculty in enhancing the current College Learning Studies (CLS100) curriculum. This chapter groups the perceptions of the most important topics as described by new and experienced students as well as faculty at GRCC, an urban college in Michigan and organizes them by categories.

A constructivist approach was taken when gathering student and faculty perceptions. Crotty (1998) stated that Constructivism is the process for which individuals construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Through focus group interviews participants were able to construct meaning through social interaction. This social interaction between participants allowed for a deeper and richer exploration of these individuals' experience with the CLS100 curriculum.

Organization of the Findings

In order to facilitate the findings encapsulated in this chapter, an organization of the chapter is outlined as follows:

Data were collected on the primary research question of, "What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced student's persistence at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC)?" Four secondary research questions were also created for this study. These questions addressed whether or not there were differences in perceptions between new and experienced students and between students and faculty about which CLS100 curricular elements lead to student persistence, what elements may be present in the curriculum to make it less meaningful and what is missing to enhance course meaningfulness.

Categories of themes were generated through an inductive analysis of focus group transcripts and facilitator notes produced from interviews with new and experienced students as well as full and part-time faculty. These categories were then compared to the CLS100 course learning outcomes during deductive analysis. The CLS100 course learning outcomes that matched during analysis will be utilized as the framework for this chapter. There were several subcategories that were added beyond the stated CLS00 learning outcomes in order to fully address the themes generated during coding and data analysis.

Table 2

Research Questions and Categories

Research Questions	Categories
RQ1: What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced student's persistence at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC)?	Social Integration Academic Integration College Services Integration Skill Development Academic and Career Planning
RQ2: Are there differences in the perceptions of new and experienced students about what topics taught in CLS100 curriculum that contributed toward their ability to persist?	Discussed throughout Chapter 4 and further in Chapter 5
RQ3: How do students and faculty differ in their perceptions of the topics of the CLS100 curriculum that contribute toward student persistence?	Discussed throughout Chapter 4 and further in Chapter 5
RQ4: What do faculty and students perceive to be present in the CLS100 curriculum that make it less meaningful?	Discussed throughout Chapter 4 and further in Chapter 5
RQ5: What do faculty and students perceive to be missing in the CLS100 curriculum to make it more meaningful?	Discussed throughout Chapter 4 and further Chapter 5

The quotations used in this chapter are as close to the verbatim transcriptions as

possible and can be noted in this chapter as focus group code and line number(s) (e.g.,

NS2 lines 185-187). Focus group codes are outlined in the following table:

	Table 3		
	Focus Group Codes		
Code	Description		Date
NS1	New Student Focus Group		12/3/12
NS2	New Student Focus Group		12/5/12
ES1	Experienced Student Focus Group		12/6/12
ES2	Experienced Student Focus Group		12/7/12
ES3	Experienced Student Focus Group		12/17/12
FA1	Faculty Focus Group		12/14/12
FA2	Faculty Focus Group		12/19/12

Although minimal editing was necessary for accuracy, the interviewee's voice was used. In every instance where a student or faculty member made a reference to a specific name to include those of persons, individual titles or department names, the findings show [faculty name] or [position title] or [department name].

Participants

This study had eight new and seven experienced student participants who enrolled and successfully completed CLS100 and persisted at GRCC. Of the new student participants, four were male and four were female. Seven of them were Caucasian and one African American. Of the experienced student participants four were male and three were female. Six were Caucasian and one African-American. As previously noted, the definitions of new and experienced students are:

- *New Student*- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted the next semester. In this study, one semester is fall 2012 to winter 2013.

- *Experienced Student*- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted for one or more years. In this study, the timeline is course completion fall 2011 or any semester prior to.

Eight faculty members participated in this study. Two of the faculty members were male and six were female. In addition, six of the faculty members were part-time and two were full-time. The ethnicity represented by the faculty participants was five Caucasian and three African-American.

Focus Group Interviews

There are ten institutionally approved student learning outcomes for CLS100. These learning outcomes became the basis of deductive analysis against the themes discovered through the inductive analysis of the focus group transcripts in order to derive categories. The primary research question has been answered throughout each of the learning outcomes and the sub research questions are either addressed throughout this chapter through the learning outcomes or answered at the end of the data analysis section, or in Chapter 5. The final section is the document analysis section whereby ten randomly selected CLS100 course syllabi were reviewed to determine if the student learning outcomes were clearly outlined.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Define the traits of successful college students.
The first CLS100 learning outcome is categorized as 'Academic Integration' in these

findings. First, all participants identified understanding the differences between high school and college as a link to college success.

Differences between high school and college. Both new and experienced students identified having an understanding of the differences and responsibility levels between high school and college as an important element to being successful in college. This theme was mostly noted by new students making comments such as, "…You have to know how to handle yourself whereas in high school, teachers tell you what to do, how to do it, and where to go and when to be there (NS2 lines 40-41)" and "you are responsible for yourself here. At high school, you have parents, teachers or principals that are there to insure that you are there and participating (NS2 lines 44-45)." Another new student discussed that college is harder than high school and what needed to be done for them to be successful in college stating, "I guess working harder. In high school, I was the type of guy who could just go through and do the assignment real fast and get an A so I think for here, I have to work a little harder (NS2 lines 184-186)."

An experienced student noted a similar theme of college lacking structure of high school, the student commented:

> Right before I was fresh out of high school so everything was very structured and I didn't really need to keep a schedule because I did the same thing every day … just the absence of structure threw me for a tailspin like that first couple weeks. Just knowing how to get myself into a new routine and this is how I am going to do it, and this is how much time I need to set aside for each thing, helped a lot (ES1 lines 83-90).

An experienced student noted a time element as to why she took this course, she stated, "I took CLS because I hadn't been to school in 10 years and I was definitely not prepared to go back to school without knowing what I was getting myself into first (ES3 line 64-66)." A new student linked the time element to the reasoning for taking CLS100 by stating, "I felt that I didn't want to take it as I know everything. I can be an adult and I can be as old as I am and been out of high school but still there is always something to know (NS2 lines 49-51)."

A faculty member commented about acclimating a new high school student through providing "support, whether it be academically, financially, spiritually, emotionally, those are the components that need to be present and understanding the diversity that comes with the new high school student … (FA2 line 512-514)."

A second trait of a successful student was noted through a demographic characteristic of age. Understanding the differences between an adult versus a traditional aged student learning, focus and commitment was important for faculty as they determined the appropriate teaching strategies.

Adult versus traditional aged. The faculty participant groups were the only groups to engage in conversation about the trait differences of an adult versus a traditional aged student taking CLS100. These faculty members discussed the attitudinal differences and ways to acclimate these different student populations. A faculty member noted a greater focus and desire to be a successful person of adult students by sharing the attitudinal difference of an adult versus traditional aged student taking CLS100 course by stating,

I had a guy that was elderly. He did extremely well but he was very focused and new to this whole kind of learning. Things had happened in his life previously,

and you step out to do those things and to get re-acclimated, this really helped

him. Not just to be successful in school but to be just a successful person. He

really took away the information and used it outside of the classroom. It meant

more to him but clearly you could tell those students that were there because to

them it was a for sure A and that kind of thing so that attitude was a little

different (FA1 lines 661-667).

Another faculty member noted that there are different pedagogical approaches to

acclimate traditional and non-traditional aged students into the academic environment by

commenting, "we will learn the context of teaching not only what is in the text but

diversity of learning approach which is a huge skill set that students sometimes were

missing coming in from the high school setting or coming into college for the first-year

or not being in college for a long time." Another faculty member noted:

…You are working with them on an individual basis….You have individuals who

are coming into a new setting. Some of them are very naïve on how they

approach college…. You will find new students who have been out of college for

20+ years.   This is their first time (FA2 lines 104-111).

A third trait of a successful college student is motivation. This subcategory was

identified by new students as well as faculty and is outlined in the next section of this

chapter.

Motivation. New students stated that motivation was a trait that improves their

chances of completing their college goals. This category trait was discovered through

responses to the interview question of, "What could the college do through the CLS100

course to improve your chances of completing your college goals?" One new student commented, "Really motivation is key factor so if there was any way to help students to find that motivation, I would say that would be the best avenue for insuring college success (NS1 lines 356-358)." Another new student commented on needing motivation to understand how to meet goals by stating, "Knowing how to find out more about where you want to go, like I thought I knew where I wanted to go after this but then it is like, how do I get there? Knowing how to get there motivated me a little bit more (NS1 lines362-364)."

There was little commentary on motivation from the experienced student perspective. However, an experienced student did discuss the value of CLS100 to motivate academically and as a person by stating "… It gave you motivation I think, not only in this class but motivation to get better grades and to just do better as a person. I think this is a great class. It gave me some self-esteem as well (ES2 lines 148-150)."

A faculty member noted motivation as a key element to helping students understand the benefits of the curriculum to help them be a successful college student. The faculty member commented that they:

> Motivate students to feel like I really need this class, I really need to work hard, getting something out of this class, and it will help me to be successful. If we can get those kind of pieces in this class, which we always say there are but I don't think we have a lot. That would be helpful. There are students who think the class is just like helping GRCC instead of them getting help (FA1 lines 682-687).

Another faculty member shared how they motivate through expectations by commenting "I remember having a discussion with one of my groups and I said to them, I come in

everyday and I give you 150 percent and I expect the same. Don't come in the classroom unless you are going to give it to me (FA2 lines 209-211)." This faculty member further stated, "I think that when you place that expectation, 'I expect for you to succeed, you cannot be mediocre, you are so much better than that' and they begin to see that my professor believes that I can do this and I have got to do this (FA2 lines 213-216)." An additional faculty member discussed the need for repetitive affirmation of the purpose and positive long-term effects of CLS100 by having shared, "I try to bring the value of the importance of the class. I also talk about the students who take this class will end up graduating or proceeding with their education. I keep on telling them because the more you keep on talking about something, the more the student will take it serious (FA1 lines 229-232)."

A fourth trait identified was dedication. Dedication to complete, succeed and graduation were the primary traits noted. This trait is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Dedication. Another category trait noted by both new and experienced students was dedication. Students were asked as part of their focus group interviews "Are you more dedicated to graduate than prior to taking CLS100?" Half of the new student respondents came to GRCC knowing the goal of graduation or transfer and remained dedicated to that goal. One new student commented, "I came in here knowing what I wanted to do and I still feel the same way (NS2 line 244)." Another new student noted, "I began with an idea… They had us pinpoint what our passions were and I did and I'm going into social work … (NS2 lines 215-221)." More than half of the experienced

students did not come to GRCC dedicated toward graduation. An experienced student

noted how the course contributed toward their dedication to graduation by commenting:

… I think before the class I was kind of in this, well, it is a community college

and it doesn't seem as serious as if I had started a four-year. The longer I have

been here and especially taking that class and knowing what it is like to be in

college (ES1 lines 120-123).

A fifth trait identified in these results was the ability to identify, set and fulfill

personal and academic goals. This trait is outlined in the next section of this chapter.

Goals. The initial question for both the new and experienced students was "How

do you define student success?" The intent of this question for students was not only an

icebreaker to introduce the interview but also as a way to determine how students identify

college success. The majority of each respondent group discussed fulfilling goals or

having a stated plan of direction as the way to define student success. A new student

noted the importance of having goals by having stated, "Setting and trying to make a path

toward those goals (NS1 lines 20)." Several other new students noted emotions of

feeling, knowing and being contented with having a stated direction or goals by having

noted, "Having comfortably challenging goals (NS1 line 23)", continued with, "I feel it is

about goals that are reached and make you feel content as you achieve those goals (NS2

lines 23-24)" and "Knowing and being confident in what you want to do (NS1 line 25)."

Experienced students also shared comments such as, "I think that student success

is that when a student goes to school and figures out what they want to do with their lives

and then goes on to do it (ES3 lines 22-23)", "I think you can have personal success such

as having a goal and achieving it (ES2 lines 21-22)" and, "For me, I set certain goals for myself that I expect I will reach (ES1 lines 19-20)."

Like new and experienced students, faculty respondents were asked the same question of "How do you define student success?" Faculty participants also discussed goal attainment as a primary mechanism to define student success. One faculty member commented, "Achieving the goal. If the goal is to come in and take two classes, then success is completing those two classes. Obtaining their goal (FA1 lines 506-507)." Another stated that their teaching methodology was to encourage the setting and achieving of student's goals by stating, "… Helping them realize that regardless of where they are right now, like if you set a goal for yourself, you can achieve it, you just have to make a plan (FA1 lines 524-525)." Another faculty member noted the importance of establishing short and long-range goals by stating:

> Completing their goals and also taking a look at not just short-term goals, not just mid-term goals, but long-term goals so that they are kind of creating a pathway throughout the course of their life, that it becomes kind of a journey in education… (FA2 lines 487-490).

For faculty, graduation or transfer was equally as important as fulfilling goals. One faculty member stated that acquisition of a degree or transfer defines student success but not all students have that same goal in mind, specifically, "I think from a college perspective, our goal would be to see them come back and either get a degree or to transfer but they don't always have that same intention (FA1 lines 515-516)." Another faculty member indicated that completion can be degree or degrees but it is all relevant to the individual student, they stated, "I define success as completion. That probably brings

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up the question, completion of what, and that depends on what the students' own individual goals are (FA2 lines 482-483)." Community Colleges continue to struggle with accountability with the primary measurement of graduation rates. As indicated by this faculty member and a vast amount of literature, completion is not always degree acquisition, especially at community colleges.

Good grades. A subcategory of 'Acclimation to Academic Environment' by new and experienced students was the acquisition of good grades. This was noted when asked, "How do you define student success?" A new student mentioned, "The results aren't necessarily important but good grades are helpful which is generally defined as success for most students (NS1 lines 20-22)." An additional new student indicated, "Student success to me is just grades. I don't think we are here for any other reason than grades and to transfer into another school (NS2 lines 19-20)." An experienced student also indicated grades as the way to define student success by having noted, "Obviously, my GPA is very important to me and my grades are very important to me (ES1 lines 21-22)." There was no faculty commentary on grades as an indicator of student success.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Identify and visit college services. The second learning outcome is categorized as 'College Services Integration' in the findings. Several new students commented on the importance of the CLS100 curriculum to acclimate them to the college services available to help them be a successful student. A new student commented, "…They kind of explained in the class where everything was on campus that you needed to go, like if you wanted to graduate, I would have no idea that you had to apply for graduation and where to go for those different things. I had no idea where I was going except to the rooms where my classes were (NS1 lines 65-69)." Another new

student commented on how important learning where things were on campus and that they would not have known if it were not for the CLS00 class by having stated, "I think the first thing we did in that class was go through all of the places you go to at GRCC like the resources. I wouldn't have known that if I hadn't taken the class (NS2 lines 84-86)." Another new student responded to the interview question "What aspect of the curriculum was most relevant to you staying at GRCC?" by stating, "Going over all the resources available on campus was really helpful … (NS1 line 90)." Another new student agreed by stating "I think it made me more comfortable about being here and like wanting to stay because I felt like I had things more figured out (NS1 lines 87-88)."

Many students commented on learning about services through an exercise titled 'scavenger hunt' to assist with acclimation to college services. A new student commented, "Yes, we did something like a scavenger hunt. She just sat down in class and told us. It was stuff that I thought would be taught at orientation but it wasn't at all (NS1 lines 71-73)." An experienced student noted the scavenger hunt was helpful by stating:

> …She gave us a worksheet to take home and I think it was called an online
>
> scavenger hunt. … . It was really helpful because when I was a senior, I was
>
> dual-enrolled but my classes were at Sneden so I didn't really how big the
>
> campus was because I had never been onto the main campus before. Then,
>
> there are campuses in Holland and all across so that was nice to know that this
>
> is how you get here and this is what is around here and these are the types of
>
> classes that you will be taking here (ES1 lines 173-174, 183-188).

Another experienced student commented on how helpful the scavenger hunt was as it contributed to not only service but also social integration but stating, "We did have a scavenger hunt at the beginning of the course...Not only did you create a networking thing but it also let you find stuff so if you ever have to go there again, you will know where it is at (ES2 lines 103-109)." The student noted this exercise as a networking opportunity because you had to actually engage with individuals who worked in various departments to get the information to complete the scavenger hunt assignment. Another experienced student shared their experience with the scavenger hunt assignment by commenting:

> We did have a scavenger hunt that you had to do at the very beginning of the semester and I really didn't want to do it. We were in a group and I thought, oh, this is so stupid but after we did it, I really became familiar with the campus. You come to the orientation and people are walking you around places and you don't even know where you are going. You just pop into a building and are told this is the library. Actually, going into those buildings, talking to people, and having to gather information was really helpful (ES1 lines 103-109).

Faculty stated on several occasions that it is their role through the CLS100 course to acclimate students to college services. However, there were no specific examples of a scavenger hunt exercise of what is included in this exercise but it was stated that it is a mechanism utilized to acclimate students to the institution and service areas. Faculty discussed utilizing outside expertise as supplemental instruction or conducted physical tours to acclimate students to the service areas of library, computer labs and career development services.

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***Student Learning Outcome 3: Identify beliefs, attitudes and habits that may
inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.*** The third
CLS100 learning outcome is categorized as 'Skill Development' in these findings. The
'Skill Development' category not only identified numerous habits, attitudes and, beliefs
but also identified academic and social skills necessary to be successful in college and
these results will be produced in Learning Outcomes 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Procrastination. Procrastination was a subcategory of 'Skill Development'. Both
new and experienced students commented on how the curriculum positively impacted
them with combating procrastination. A new student commented that the textbook
assisted them in working through procrastination, they stated, "It is about the
procrastination actually … by knowing what I have learned out of those books, I just use
everything that I was told and it may be corny but I gave it a fair chance (NS2 lines 76-
80)." Another new student commented, "Techniques were provided of things that we
sometimes do when we are procrastinating and how we can avoid them and think
positively through them so that was a benefit of the class (NS1 lines 259-261)." An
additional experienced student also commented, "I don't procrastinate as much anymore
(ES3 line 116)."

Anxiety, stress, and depression. Anxiety, stress and depression were identified as
a subcategory of 'Skill Development'. Both new and experienced students talked about
the feelings of being a new student and how CLS100 helped them combat anxiety and
stress. A new student commented, "I think a big part of it was I was really nervous and
really apprehensive about everything. The classroom was such a nice atmosphere (NS1
lines 93-94). An additional new student talked about the overwhelming feelings and the

ability to relate to the stories in the textbook as a coping mechanism. The new student commented:

> …all the trial and tribulations that you go through in those first few weeks of school. The overwhelming feeling, anxiety, test anxiety, all of those things, they actually happen and by knowing what I have learned out of those books… I thought, let's apply this. Someone wrote it, they must have known what they were talking about and I am actually going through this week by week. There was always something in that book that I was facing myself (NS2 lines 76-83).

New and experienced students commented that the course alleviates the anxiety through teaching organizational and stress management skills. A new student commented that the textbook really helped alleviate stress level through the techniques provided for staying organized, the comment was, "'Book Focus' that definitely helped me. I had to make sure that I was looking at everything clearly because whenever I start something new, I get really disorganized and stressed out. I think it helped me gain the ability to focus (NS1 lines 244-247)." Another new student commented on how school can lead to depression and feelings of being overwhelmed but learned to combat stress through CLS100, the comment shared was, "….depression and how school can become overwhelming and how to get help and support if you need it. … We actually did some things on the board and figured out what type of person you were and matched what would work in alleviating some of that stress. That was helpful (NS2 lines 170-176)." An experienced student shared this comment:

> I think the biggest thing with taking that class would probably be like the anxiety because this year, especially my course load is a lot heavier than it was last year

and I guess managing my time would be the best time…. If I hadn't taken that class, I don't know if I would have been as organized as I am now so that helps a lot (ES1 lines 51-57).

A faculty member discussed the benefit to students to have the CLS100 curriculum to reside in Student Affairs Division as well as within the Counseling Department by sharing:

It is a good thing that counseling is the department from which professors for that class are drawn because we sort of have a background of resources and if personal counseling is needed, if community resources are needed, there are many many ways to navigate a decision and each of us know that because each of us have had things thrown in our path of life when life happens to you. How you handle that with a person who is caught up in a trauma or crisis, they don't think clearly. Anxiety means that you don't think clearly. There is literally too much anxiety for you to do so that your flight or fight responses are elevated (FA2 lines 307-315).

Another faculty member commented when asked to define student success that it can just be a day without anxiety. The faculty member shared:

It is a hard question to answer because it is different for every single student I look at and so if you ask me how I define success for my students, it is different for each one. I can probably go down the list and say why it is different for each one. Some, it is they are here. Some, they didn't have anxiety today (FA2 lines 469-472).

Based on these findings, emotional and physical wellness are critical areas for first-year student development as noted primarily by new students and faculty members.

Student Learning Outcome 4: Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking. The fourth CLS100 learning outcome is categorized as 'Skill Development' in these findings. In these findings the areas of note-taking, test-taking, study-skills, time management, writing, critical thinking, memory building, and reading were identified as critical components to student persistence by students and/or faculty. These areas will be discussed individually throughout the next section of the chapter.

Note-taking. New and experienced students discussed being a better note taker after CLS100. A new student commented on what the learning consisted of by stating, "The study tips…what you should do to be able to take better notes or learn better and then study better (NS2 lines 189-191)." An experienced student shared a similar outcome:

> … She figured out what we were good with and what we weren't, our strong suits and our bad suits. She would focus on those bad suits and help us get better at them. I am not a very good note taker and what we did was bring in a set of our notes and she went through them throughout the class and we figured out how we could take better notes. She gave us note advice so I think that really helped me throughout the rest of my courses and the rest of my term (ES2 lines 38-44).

Another experienced student commented, "I take notes a lot better than I used to. I feel that I am more efficient as a student than I was in high school. I learned those basic skills that help you succeed in class (ES3 lines 252-254)."

Test-taking and study skills. Very little commentary took place around test-taking and study skills but a few comments were noteworthy. A new student noted how learning about test taking assisted them in prioritizing the several components of a test; they commented, "There is a chapter we read in the book about test taking. … It was nice because if you have a test with a bunch of different types of questions, it is nice to know like, should I start with the essay or should I start with the multiple choice (NS1 lines 110-114)." An additional new student commented on gaining study skills through CLS100 by commenting:

> I think that it has helped me because I do have some hard classes right now and the study options, or how to study, or which way works best for you, or finding out what works best. I use those and I can study a lot better (NS2 lines 71-73).

An experienced student discussed being required to attend two college workshops and the benefits reaped from doing so, the comment was, "We had to go to like two workshops… I went to test taking and study skills. It helped me further to help me study and take tests so that was cool (ES2 lines 215-218)."

A faculty member commented on how they incorporate test taking skill development into the curriculum by sharing:

> I tried to tell them that is because I want you to think through these questions and typically if you will look at my test, whether it is a multiple choice, true/false, or essay and I do give them essays that are pretty strong and ask for some good

strong writing, and I understand that they might not be in their English class yet but they need to start thinking in terms of reading and writing because those are two things they are not going to get away with not doing in any college class that they are in (FA2 lines 739-744).

Time management. Time management was a theme identified as a subcategory of skill development by both new and experienced students; however, new students primarily commented on this skill. A new student commented on time management exercise having stated:

It was interesting. We totaled up the number of hours we worked during the week and free time and study time and one of my nights totaled up to 3 ½ to 4 hours of sleep that I actually got. I was like, oh yeah; I remember that. It kind of just tells you what you have to sacrifice to get things done (NS1 lines 205-208).

Another new student noted time management study as "….one of the more helpful subjects. It helped me try to get more organized and put priorities in my life (NS1 lines 208-209)." An additional new student commented, "I think the time management one that we did was one of those that I liked (NS1 lines 213-214)." Another new student commented not finding value in the time study as it did not change their habits; however, his/her awareness of the necessity of time management was raised. The student commented:

I know one of them was like right down how much time you spend on each thing and even though I did write all of that down and I found out I spend too much time on the computer or hanging out with friends. I didn't really change my

habits that much. Maybe by like 30 minutes or something but I don't think that

one affected me at all (NS2 lines 144-147).

Another new student in this focus group agreed with that comment while another shared

that he/she believed it made a positive change for his/her by having commented, "It

helped me because I didn't realize how much time I was spending doing some of the

things. … As soon as I changed that, then I was able to get better grades… (NS2 lines

150-155)."

A new student commented on the desire to add time management to the

curriculum by sharing:

I think one good thing but I don't think they covered it at all was working

students. I have a lot of friends that work. They have no time for homework. They

just can't manage their time at all. I think that would be something. I know they

definitely touched on it but I think they should go more in depth for those people

(NS2 lines 286-289).

There was very little commentary on time management as a skill development

component of CLS100 by faculty. One faculty member did note that time management

was the most important skill that contributes to a student's success when asked, "What

skills do you feel are necessary for students to be successful in college?"

Writing. Very little commentary took place with new and experienced students as

well as faculty on writing as a skill development component of the curriculum. An

experienced student commented on writing as something desired to be added to the

course curriculum having stated:

… maybe how to write a paper, older and young people. Older people don't have a lot of experience with technology so they are not prepared when they go into English or other classes and the teachers are also unprepared for them not being able to do that also. So even if there were a couple classes devoted to doing a word project on Microsoft Word. I think that would be something that would be good (ES2 lines 138-143).

A faculty member shared that they engaged in exercises for writing skill development; he/she commented:

…working through like the trouble shooting of writing, which was huge, learning how to construct a sentence, learning MLA formatting, APA formatting, even though it is not a part of the book you are supposed to teach, it is something you necessarily need to teach in order to set them up for success (FA2 lines 72-76).

Journal writing was identified as one of the primary writing development exercises used in CLS 100 by both students and faculty. Comments were both in favor of and against this as a positive aspect of the curriculum. A new student commented:

I think those journals are 100 percent necessary because I mean she doesn't want the book answer, she wants you to have a personal experience in it. When you talk about what is going on in your life, it makes her know how you actually feel (ES2 lines 129-132).

Another experienced student commented on the value of journal writing having stated:

…I could think for myself and it wasn't really like the teacher doing everything for you. She made you bring home your own assignments, write in your own

journals, based on what your thoughts were. It was my opinion, not someone

telling me how I should feel about something (ES3 lines 79-82).

 A faculty member shared that as part of the college success plan, specifically learning

outcome number nine, journals were required as part of their curriculum. Experienced

students also noted having to write journals as part of the curriculum. However, in

contrast several did not feel they were beneficial. An experienced student commented, "I

think it was good at getting people involved but I think it was too many journals (ES3

lines 219-220)." Another experienced student made similar comment of "…We had to

read a chapter or something and we had to like try and relate it to ourselves more times.

That was not beneficial at all (ES3 lines 214-217)."

Critical thinking. Little commentary took place around critical thinking skills

from both students and faculty. A new student did comment that the supplemental

textbook, *The Other Wes Moore,* having shared:

> I really liked the additional textbook more than the actual textbook. It was more
>
> interesting and it kind of made you draw relationships from what you are learning
>
> in class to the textbook. It was much more direct. A little bit more critical thinking
>
> (NS1 Line 147-150).

A faculty member did indicate that critical thinking skills are necessary when

responding to the question, "What skills do you feel are necessary for students to be

successful in college?" Another faculty member commented on their role to develop this

skill in his/her statement:

We are here to teach them to think and with that critical thinking component, to

be able to ask the questions, to be able to get the responses that they need to

know, to find the information. Those are things that employers are going to be

looking for too. That is kind of how I conceptualize the class, kind of like a three-

part course (FA2 lines 752-756).

Reading. Faculty identified reading as the strongest subcategory of 'Skill

Development.' First, faculty discussed the varying reading levels of the community

college student. A faculty member commented on the complexities of teaching to a wide

variety of reading levels by stating:

I found out very early on that I had a student that was not able to keep up with the

other students in reading. She had a very difficult time comprehending any

reading assignment so it kind of limited me to what I could do in the class because

she was so left behind and it would take her so much longer and I wanted to give

her that opportunity to keep up (FA1 lines 233-237).

Another faculty member cautioned on varying reading levels by stating that:

We have such a diverse student body that we have to be aware of the reading

level. I don't think we ever want to make this course something that is too high of

a level for any of our students. We want it to be accessible to all. There may be,

and this comes back to the beginning of what the instructors are given, there may

be supplemental materials that could help the more advanced readers then feel

more challenged in the course (FA1 lines 452-457).

Faculty commented on the *Focus on Community College Success* textbook as a great way to integrate reading skill development into the curriculum. First, a faculty member commented on the *Focus on Community College Success* textbook as it relates to reading when he/she shared, "The CLS 100 book is written for people that have fairly college-ready reading skills (FA2 lines 192)." Another faculty discussed the stories at the beginning of each chapter as a way to introduce skill development topics, they commented:

I think that CLS text is one of the framework pieces as it tells stories about people's lives and those stories are meant to be applicable to our students. They are meant to help the student find that connection; no you are not alone. You are not the only one that struggles with reading (FA2 lines 330-333).

Another faculty member shared the importance of insuring that the reading assignments are being accomplished as a transferable skill to other courses. He/she stated:

One of the good things that you can do with the textbook, in terms of setting these students up for success and letting them know what is coming is to give them those reading assignments ahead of time and meet them with quizzes and things to determine whether or not they have read that information. When they don't it is a good opportunity to say, you know what, try this in anatomy and physiology, try this in chemistry, try this in English or political science, this is not going to work. This is what you have to do. They get those lessons coming to them from a CLS 100 class, which has forgiveness to it that a chemistry instructor cannot afford (FA2 lines 195-202).

Another faculty member commented that they strive to enhance student reading development by noting how they engage students in conversation. The faculty member participant stated that they start the evaluation process with the student's current reading level to provide input on how to read faster and more efficiently. The comment shared was, "How are you currently reading your textbook so we can show you a faster way to get to the source of that material and answer those questions? (FA2 lines 169-171)."

An additional skill identified as it relates to the learning outcomes was memory building. However, there was very little commentary by new and experienced students and no commentary by faculty about memory building as a factor of skill development within the CLS100 curriculum.

Student Learning Outcome 5: Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them. The fifth learning outcome is categorized as 'Skill Development' in these findings. Throughout the findings all participants discussed various aspects of learning styles, lecture styles and the use of textbook chapter exercises and case studies.

Learning styles versus lecture styles. Learning and lecture styles were topics of conversation for new and experienced students as well as faculty. Commentary was both favorable and not favorable regarding the exercises utilized within the curriculum as far as learning styles. A new student stated that understanding their learning style helped them study better by noting, "Anything from your specific learning styles to kind of your overarching personality style really helps to just kind of figure out not only how you want to study but what you want to study (NS1 lines 123-124)." An additional new student stated that comparing personal learning styles to teaching styles was a beneficial part of

the curriculum by commenting, "It talked about learning styles as well as lecture styles which was a nice contrast (NS 1 lines 116-117)."

An experienced student indicated that CLS100 benefited them in understanding how they learn by stating, "I think it helped me to learn how I learn personally and how to best support that style of learning (ES3 71-72)." An experienced student also noted he/she are still learning to understand different lecture styles through utilization of lessons learned in CLS100, he/she commented:

I am still working on that personally because I do still have a hard time learning from certain instructors. When I don't understand the way that they teach, I tend to review the materials after the course or before the course that he is going to teach on the next day and try to teach myself so that I can understand it when he goes back over it and so I can have input in the class (ES2 lines 65-69).

Both new and experienced students were asked, "What would you remove from the class?" A new student commented, "I think memorizing all of those really specific names of learning styles and things didn't really help me at all (NS1 lines 180-181)."

A faculty member shared that learning styles was difficult to teach when responding to question "What was the most difficult section in the text for you to develop and facilitate? Why was it difficult?" He/she noted:

I remember learning styles was difficult to teach because the students assumed they had a particular learning style and then on top of it, I can't recall the specific terms that they used to describe each one, but they had a hard time remembering the terms for that. … Students weren't grasping those terms and they were disconnecting what it actually meant. That was difficult for me and breaking

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those barriers of somebody saying, I am a watch and see type of person instead of

I am a hands-on learner, which is what they would have tested in if they filled out

that learning style test. That was difficult for me probably because they did not

believe the results of that test (FA1 lines 571-579).

***Student Learning Outcome 6: Examine the advantages and challenges of
diversity within a college context.*** The sixth CLS100 learning outcome is categorized by

"Skill Development" in these findings. Little commentary was gleaned from both new

and experienced students except in their requirement to participate in a civic engagement

activity of the Diversity Lecture Series at GRCC, which is discussed in learning outcome

ten.

Faculty commentary was not plentiful either. One faculty member did comment

on the importance of diversity as part of the college experience by stating:

The diversity thing is part of the college experience is to be able to open your

mind and see the world in a different way. …Learning that you have social

responsibilities. Learning that being a citizen is equally important and being an

educated citizen carries with it a lot more responsibility (FA2 lines 267-271).

Two faculty participants commented about how diversity was included into their

curriculum and classroom experience. One faculty member commented about being

cognizant of the topic of diversity and how it is managed within a classroom setting by

stating:

Teaching them as a teacher I became very mindful of my behavior and my actions

and how I implemented certain topics in the classroom, specifically on the topic

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of diversity. There is a chapter that covers that. Being sensitive to how they view things. Also looking at the socioeconomic status and the area that we were in, how information would be perceived, school setting (FA2 lines 95-99).

An additional faculty member indicated they enhanced student learning by commenting, "I brought two people who were not American; they were two international people just to talk about their experiences in America and other countries in the world. They liked it so much (FA1 lines 625-627)."

Student Learning Outcome 7: Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications. The sixth CLS100 learning outcome is categorized as 'Social Integration' and 'Skill Development' in these findings. The findings for the areas of health and wellness, finance and communication skills are explored throughout this learning outcome section.

Health/Wellness. The focus group discussion with new students resulted in health and wellness as a subcategory of 'Skill Development'. The curriculum introduced sleep, nutrition and exercise strategies to assist students as part of being a healthy, productive and effective student. A new student commented that the curriculum was "Just a reminder to stay active, watch what you eat, sleep (NS1 line 253)." Another new student commented, "We had like health rules that we used. I think the three important things were sleep, nutrition, and exercise. They specifically told us that exercise is very important to being a healthy student (NS2 lines 162-164)." Another new student commented on having health/wellness as a group project the comment was "….did like a group project on it to write down a whole bunch of different ways to like how you could be more active or get more sleep if you need to or something like that (NS2 167-169)."

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Experienced students and faculty made no comment to health and wellness specifically; however, there was discussion of procrastination, stress and anxiety, which is analyzed in Learning Outcome number three discussed previously.

Finance. The topic of finance resulted in a subcategory of the 'Skill Development' category. Very little commentary took place within the faculty focus groups and none within the student focus groups. Several faculty members indicated they utilized external speaker and activities as a supplement to the curriculum. Noted most often was the utilization of a Credit Union Representative to lead the financial component of the curriculum.

There was no student commentary on financial literacy or other elements being present in the CLS100 curriculum.

Communication skills. The focus group interviews resulted in interpersonal communication as a subcategory of both 'Social Integration' and 'Skill Development.' First, when faculty members were asked, "What skills do you feel are necessary for students to be successful in college?" several faculty members stated interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills. A faculty member commented on the importance of communication as a trait for students by stating, "The ability to communicate what their needs are so then if there is a way that we can address them (FA1 lines 554-555)." Another faculty member commented that intrapersonal communication is key to a student's understanding by having shared the statement, "Intrapersonal communication. How they communicate within themselves. They hear what they want to hear. They hear what you don't say (FA1 lines 557-558)."

Second, throughout each focus group interview social integration was clearly

identified as a force to support the development of student interpersonal communication

skills. The first focus of social integration resided around the student-to-student

interaction in the classroom. An experienced student commented about group

discussions as a way to socially integrate by sharing, "We had a lot of group discussions

in my class…That kind of helped us break out of our shell (ES2 lines 243-244)." Another

experienced student indicated a benefit to taking CLS100 as learning how to better

interact with peers by stating, "I would say yes, it taught me how to interact with other

students in the classroom setting, which I think is really important (ES3 lines 89-90)."

Two other experienced students responded to the question, "What would you add to the

class?" by indicating they would add more group activities. One of these experienced

students commented, "I think that there should be more group activities when you are a

first time student or going back, you are like a little fish in a big sea. Why not do a group

project and bond with them… (ES3 lines 145-147)." The second experienced student

commented, "That is the only thing I could find is more group projects. It is a whole

different place to get to know people and want to feel comfortable with people you are in

class with (ES3 lines 149-151)."

A new student commented about engaging with students in the class to acquire

feedback as being helpful by stating:

> It was nice because everybody that was in the classroom was at the same level
>
> that I was. It wasn't mixed like all my other classes were. So, I got to have
>
> feedback with other students in the classroom to see what they were doing their
>
> first-year (ES1 lines 37-40).

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A faculty member also indicated utilizing class time for group work as a way to socially integrate students, the comment shared was, "I utilize the two hours in the class so they do a lot of group work with two to four and maybe so forth (FA1 lines 224-225)."

Several new student participants were part of the honors program. The social integration aspect was one reason why students elected to take CLS100. A new student noted, "One other thing is really building the network of the honors students (NS1 lines 469-470)." Another new student stated:

> I joined the honors program later than everyone else so I kind of heard about it
> through everyone in my other honors classes … most people in my other classes
> were taking it. I thought I would just do it to because I wanted the credit and I felt
> like I needed to because everyone else was (NS1 lines 45-49).

Another new student stated:

> We were all new to the honors program and new students obviously. It built up a
> nice atmosphere and gave us a head start on what we were going to be doing for
> the next couple years. It helped us out being better people and students (NS1
> lines 96-99).

An additional new student commented on the benefit of the cohort effect of the CLS100 course for honors students by sharing:

> The honors component was very beneficial. I have some friends who are taking
> the regular component. It is the same class, just without the honors specific things,
> and they said it is not really much of a benefit to them. Also related, one other
> thing is really building the network of the honors students. I have really enjoyed

building the relationships, not only personal but academic. If I need help with

something, you know, oh, so and so is good with this subject, maybe I could talk

to them and they could give me a few pointers (NS1 lines 466-472).

Numerous comments were made by faculty members, which indicated the

importance of student-to-student interaction. A faculty member participant commented:

I think learning who each other are and not being afraid. One of the things we

talk about is how to rely on your classmates because if you do need to be absent,

how to ask for notes, how to conduct yourself. Learning that they are in a

community of learners is really an important part (FA2 lines 241-244).

 Another faculty commented on the importance of building a sense of community and

family within the classroom through social integration by stating:

After a while, they begin to feel like family. That is an important part. If you are

in a college and if you understand that it is a community, and if you understand

that you have some support within that community, when obstacles occur, then

instead of trying to suffer in silence or just walking away or dropping out, you

have people that you can ask. That is probably the biggest part of what we do is

try to connect them (FA2 lines 257-261).

Another faculty member was very intentional each day to assure social integration within

the classroom to provide opportunity for students to get to know each other:

I worked in the classroom to integrate the students getting to know each other was

by switching it up. I would walk into the classroom every day and say, switch it

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up, if you are sitting next to the same person you sat next to when you first

walked in here, you need to find somebody else to sit next to (FA2 lines 275-279).

A second avenue of social integration into the CLS100 curriculum is student to
faculty contact. An experienced student stated a different element of comfort with their
CLS100 instructor by commenting, "I think this is more or less a friendlier relationship. I
can always go back to her and ask her any questions about GRCC. I just feel more
comfortable around her, let's put it that way (ES2 lines 258-260)." Both new and
experienced students noted a benefit to taking CLS100 when taught by a counselor. A
new student commented, "I am really glad that we had the teacher we had because she
was a counselor and she has really helped me out (NS1 lines 444-445)." Another new
student commented that social interaction with instructor, who is a counselor, as a benefit
to taking the course:

> The second benefit would be that I developed a working relationship with my
>
> counselor who to this point has been an invaluable resource. You know, just
>
> whenever you have a question, if you are comfortable with that counselor, it is
>
> much easier to ask and get a better informed answer (NS1 lines 76-79).

A new student commented the desire to add more one on one time with their instructor
when asked, "What would you add to the class?" He/she commented:

> Maybe some extra one-on-one type of thing, more or less. I know we had a one-
>
> on-one thing at the end of the class. I think she should have one at the beginning,
>
> middle, and end. I know she gave us that little pre-quiz that we took to tell us our
>
> strengths and weaknesses but I think during the middle of the thing, she should

give us a one-on-one interview and ask us how we are doing and how our other

classes are and go through how our strengths and weaknesses and how this class

has made them better. That is what I think they should add next time (ES2 lines

94-100).

An experienced student commented, "It was nice having a counselor teach because she

knew a little bit about every department and she knew how to help us plan for the future

(ES1 lines 226-227)."

A faculty member also commented on the important of the CLS100 curriculum as

a mechanism to socially integrate students through helping them to combat academic and

personal issues, especially when the instructor is a counselor. The comment stated was:

Well, I think students have someone to turn to when something happens that they

don't know how to handle. I think in many classes that is half the battle. It is a

good thing that counseling is the department from which professors for that class

are drawn because we sort of have a background of resources … (FA2 lines 306-

309).

Peer-to-peer, student to faculty and faculty type as noted in these findings are

most critical to both student groups as well as faculty as it relates to student success.

Non-classroom integration is discussed in Learning Outcome number ten of this chapter.

Student Learning Outcome 8: Use technology in college and lifelong learning

to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards. The eighth CLS100

learning outcome is categorized as Skill Development in these findings. Experienced

students and faculty indicated that having the ability to use technology in a variety of

ways was a necessary skill for students to be successful in college. However, new students did not express the need to learn technology in the classroom nor did they express it as part of the curriculum they experienced or appreciated. In contrast, experienced students commented on several occasions the need to add technology to the curriculum by sharing, "I don't know about CLS in general but I think some sort of maybe technology based, maybe how to write a paper, older and young people (ES3 lines 138-143)." An additional comment was shared related to the support of technology infused in the curriculum, "She touched very little on the fact and how to format your header and footer. She didn't get into very much of how to use PowerPoint and how to use Word, which are very common and useful tools in college (ES3 lines 204-208)."

Several experienced students commented on learning of Blackboard and discussion boards via their CLS100 course by sharing:

> He also made us do discussion boards on Blackboard and at this point, I had no idea what Blackboard was so that helped me out as far as like in the future because I used that information to take online classes… I think that really helped me out too (ES2 lines 207-213).

An additional experienced student commented:

> We did weekly reading and then we would have quizzes at the end of the week on Blackboard. That was really nice because it kind of helped with becoming a more productive reader as well as using Blackboard because I hadn't really before and to know how to do the quizzes and everything online was really nice because now we do it in other classes and technology is not my strong point (ES1 lines 42-46).

A faculty member commented that the textbook and curriculum are lacking depth for student technology development. The comment shared was:

I don't think either one of those goes into the depth of student development pieces, into career pieces, and into some of the technological pieces in terms of the additional technological resources that are available as a part of the book that we have chosen to use (FA1 lines 30-33).

Student Learning Outcome 9: Construct a college success plan and initial career plan. The ninth CLS100 learning outcome is categorized as Academic and Career Planning in these findings. Several subcategories were constructed when discussing the college success plan as well as what aspects of the CLS100 curriculum best led to their persistence; they are described in detail below.

Goals/Plan/Direction. Students commented that their college success plan brought personal insight in order to better establish a plan and goals. A new student shared:

It was our final project for the class. It was actually part of our final exam. What I gained is that I understand myself a little bit more. I understand that now I can say with certainty what I want to do, what my plan and my goal and my path is going to be to get there. It just gave me a feeling of surety. I felt like I was secure in my decisions (NS2 lines 255-259).

Another new student commented on how they benefited from their success plan as a way of self-awareness and understanding by sharing:

What I gained is that I understand myself a little bit more. I understand that now I can say with certainty what I want to do, what my plan and my goal and my path is going to be to get there. It just gave me a feeling of security. I felt like I was secure in my decisions (NS2 lines 256-259).

An experienced student shared the benefit of their college success plan by commenting, "That helped a lot because it helped to plan out what I am going to do the following year when I came back and what classes I need to be taking (ES1 lines 133-135)." An additional experienced student shared that their College Success Plan resulted in a career paper; he/she shared:

It was pretty much you wanted to look up some background on your career. Figure out what the work environment was, wages, and the hours you worked. …In the conclusion, I talked about how I felt about the career and if I still wanted to pursue it or not and I did want to pursue it so I think that was a great paper to do some extra research on my actual career (ES2 lines 156-161).

When students were asked if they revisited their College Success Plan, three new students and four experienced students indicated they had or will utilize their College Success Plan in the future.

A faculty member shared that students are not prepared at the stage of taking CLS100 to set goals. He/she commented, "They are not quite focused on their goals yet, they are not seeing that picture even though that is what we are trying to help them do, and they are not quite ready (FA1 lines 334-335)." He/she further commented:

That was one of those projects to that I felt like if there had been something more

specific in terms of training for faculty that are best practices or specific

guidelines about how to make that a successful project.   I think that would have

been really helpful (FA1 lines 336-338).

Degree/Transfer. The main component that both new and experienced students

felt was a compelling reason for their persistence in college as well as the main learning

component of CLS100 was degree and/or transfer knowledge. A new student

commented, "The transfer section was big for me on transfer requirements. I would like

to have had more time to figure it out (NS1 lines 158-159)." Another new student

commented, "I think maybe I would have wanted to learn a little bit more how to analyze

another college's web site if you are trying to do research on that college (NS1 lines 171-

172)." Another new student commented on CLS100 being invaluable to assisting with

transfer knowledge by stating, "Learning about the transfer process was invaluable as

well. I would have never known all the different resources for transferring and even just

double checking the resources for if your credits will transfer to a four-year institution

(NS1 lines 82-84)."

When asked, "What would you add in the class?", a new student shared, "I would

like to have had more time to I guess figure it out. Just more time in the computer lab to

figure that out (NS1 lines 158-160)." An additional new student commented:

I think it really helped me a lot in researching my major and taking the time to

actually do that and to try to figure out what colleges were better. Just doing

research in general about the schooling and requirements I needed to get to where

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I wanted to because before I took the class, I knew what I wanted to do, I just

wasn't sure how to get there (NS1 lines 55-59).

An experienced student commented, "I would focus a little bit more on transferring (ES1

lines 59)."

A faculty member commented on the importance of providing general college

knowledge to students through the CLS100 curriculum. He/she commented:

I think that part of the success of CLS 100 is that you can entice a student to

learning about general college information. Things like what is college, what is a

credit hour, what makes a transcript official, how do I do that, how do I transfer,

what is the difference between an occupational degree and a transfer degree, and

all of these things are fascinating to them because they truly do not know them

(FA2 lines 140-144).

Another faculty member shared their role in providing understanding around transfer

through the CLS100 by stating:

I think our transfer population has grown significantly and that student has a

different need. Yes they need to learn GRCC but depending on the program and

the school that they are transferring to, they need to very quickly need to be

learning about that school and the transfer process and what they need to do to

prepare and to recognize that just because this is GRCC's policy, when they get

over to Grand Valley, it is not going to be the same thing (FA1 lines 463-468).

Another faculty member shared that as part of their curriculum he/she did require students to attend a transfer fair and report on the experience and learning.

Mentorship. Mentorship is identified as a subcategory of Social Integration. A new student commented on desiring mentorship to be added to the CLS100 curriculum when asked, "What would you like to see added to the course?" The comment shared was:

> Maybe if the class did something where it was they had successful students who had maybe taken the class before kind of come back and be sort of someone you can talk to, like a mentor, big sister/little sister kind of thing (NS1 lines 350-352).

A faculty member commented as part of the establishing a student's college success plan, they were also assigned a mentor. The comment was:

> …Our whole objective was then after that, okay, we have a plan, now let's set you up. Whether that meant connecting them with mentors, whether mentoring some of them myself, or providing them with additional resources and tools within the community. … (FA2 lines 379-382).

Student Learning Outcome 10: Engage in the campus and larger community through activities, which affect positive personal and civic change. The tenth CLS100 learning outcome is categorized as Social Integration and Skill Development in these findings. Three subcategories of student life/clubs, diversity lecture series and transfer fairs were identified throughout these results.

Student Life/Clubs. New and experienced students commented about different aspects of student life, clubs and organizations as it related to 'Social Integration'. An

experienced student commented about her CLS100 instructor requiring them to be active in student life activities, the comment shared:

> I actually work with [faculty name] in [department name] here too so that got me active in those as well. I feel that just being in CLS with him taught me a lot and just got me out there on the campus. I really feel comfortable if I ever have a question going to him and I have actually worked with him before too. I think that is important (ES2 lines 263-267).

Another new student expressed difficulty in finding student organizations when asked, "What would you add to the class?" He/she commented:

> The entire time there, I was always wondering where were different types of groups and things that you could be part of that could help us be even more successful on campus. …I am having complications finding groups and things like that (NS2 lines 111-116).

An experienced student stated the course helped him/her figure out how to become active in student organizations by sharing:

> …guess my biggest thing would be like I just said the small things that you don't think about or became extremely important. Recently, I just applied for Phi Theta Kappa I believe. If I hadn't taken the class, I wouldn't have known about it and I know that it was one of the first questions that were asked on my application are you a member of this organization (ES1 lines 190-194).

A new student talked about the impact CLS100 had on their ability to fulfill honors program requirements. He/she commented:

Taking the honors part of it, our teacher, I don't know if it was for everybody or what but we were required to go to a couple campus activities and write a reflection on it which is part of the honors program requirement. There was also volunteer work which is also a requirement of the honors program. I probably wouldn't have finished the honors program, like all of the extra aspects besides the credits, without that class. I wouldn't have because I wouldn't have known where to go, where to start, or where to look (NS1 lines 457-463).

Diversity lecture series. A new student commented on what they gained through attending a lecture series as it relates to Skill Development. The comment was:

We had cultural diversity or something where we had to go out in the community and around the campus and meet with people… There was one optional requirement (diversity) and I think a lot of people did that and that gave people, especially me a little bit more insight (NS1 lines 167-170).

An experienced student shared a similar experience in having shared, "I went to the diversity lecture series which was awesome. That was the first time I had ever went to one of those (ES2 206-207)."

Another new student shared his/her experience with their alternate textbook as it tied to attendance at one of the lecture series. He/she commented:

We read The Other Wes Moore. We had the option to go listen to him talk which was really cool. I guess I am not 100 percent sure if he talked about diversity specifically but we had the option to write an essay on diversity and there was

something else we did with it in class. I don't remember what it was (NS1 136-

139).

Another student spoke to the learning when attending the lecture by Wes Moore by

commenting:

Wes Moore talking to us was huge….we actually got to meet him. The speech

that he gave was huge and it did take off a bit of stress. The presentation wasn't

required but reading the book was required, that was so much better leading

directly into his presentation. His presentation was perfect (NS1 lines 140-144).

Faculty also discussed requiring students to attend a diversity lecture series or they

brought in an outside presenter from the Woodrick Diversity Learning Center.

Transfer fair. A new student shared that the requirement to attend a college fair

was beneficial by stating:

We had a cultural diversity or something where we had to go out in the

community and around the campus and meet with people and one of them was the

college transfer fair. That was one of the optional requirements and I think a lot

of people did that and that gave people, especially me a little bit more insight

(NS1 lines 167-170).

Faculty also spoke to requiring student attendance at a transfer fair as part of their

learning experience.

The Textbook

Faculty members were asked their perceptions of the *Focus on Community*

College Success textbook. The question posed was, "How effective was the CLS100

textbook *FOCUS on Community College Success*?" Varying perceptions were discussed.

New students, although not specifically asked the question, did provide some insight into

their perceptions of the textbook. A new student noted liking an alternate textbook over

the assigned textbook by commenting:

> I really liked the additional textbook more than the actual textbook. It was more
>
> interesting and it kind of made you draw relationships from what you are learning
>
> in class to the textbook. It was much more direct. A little bit more critical thinking
>
> (NS1 lines 147-150).

Another new student commented, "I think, I will just refer to the name, "Book Focus,"

that definitely helped me (NS1 lines 244-245). There was no commentary acquired from

the experienced students.

A faculty member noted that the textbook written to a level that does not inspire

or challenge students. He/she shared:

> I think, and I agree that to me, although there is great benefit in the course, if the
>
> students are really into it and apply that, I think some of it, to me, is written at
>
> such at a level that is common sense so they don't take it very serious (FA1 lines
>
> 130-132).

Other faculty agreed about the common sense aspects of the textbook by stating,

"Personally, I like the book although it felt like it was common sense on some topics

(FA1 lines 219-220)." Another faculty member stated:

> I thought *Focus* was pretty good. I think I struggled my first semester because I
>
> agree and think it was really written common sense. I had to step back and try to

figure out where they were because some of it wasn't common sense for all of

them (FA1 lines 209-211).

A faculty member also shared their perception of the textbook by sharing, "I think the CLS textbook, Focus Text, is a good textbook. Are all of the components that students need there? It is kind of a hit or miss with that (FA2 lines 160-161)."

Several faculty members spoke to utilizing supplemental instruction materials to the assigned textbook. A faculty member commented, "I found myself wishing that we had a supplemental GRCC specific curriculum (FA1 line 112)." Another stated they created their own study guides; the comment was "… I created my own study guides. …I used those instead of the course-given scripted questions (FA1 lines 427-433)." Another faculty member shared weaving in existing college workshop materials into the curriculum by stating, "There are additional training pieces that we use and in counseling we do have a series of workshops that covers many many academic skills areas so that gives us a good basis to draw on from studying for finals (FA2 lines 137-139)." The same faculty member further stated that there are particular areas that the text does not cover by explaining "…the chapter on study skills and memorization and pneumonic is not extremely complete so bringing in some exercises there and certainly on note taking (FA2 lines 135-136)."

Both students and faculty discussed the benefits of utilizing an alternate textbook in the class. A faculty member shared:

Additional books, the 'one book one college' that we utilized, it allows a student

to take a step back and kind of immerse themselves into something that is often

times tangible. With the text that we have this time, it was a very tangible read

for a lot of the students (FA2 lines 173-176).

Case studies. New and experienced students spoke favorably about the case

studies at the beginning of each chapter. A new student commented that he/she could

relate to the case studies by noting "There was always something in that book that I was

facing myself (NS2 line 82-83)." Another experienced student commented:

> Not only used them but read them in class and then we would go over the
>
> questions and reactions questions. It would ask me if we had any similarities to
>
> this person and then ways to fix or change what he is doing bad. That was pretty
>
> good. There was a couple that I could actually relate to and people were throwing
>
> out some good ideas as ways to cope with it (ES2 lines 88-92).

A faculty member shared that they only utilized those that would benefit the

current students to add value to the chapter content, the comment shared:

> What I did was I read those scenarios and then I looked for scenarios that I could
>
> use with my students. They helped me to be more creative, to contextualize my
>
> class and they ended up being very good. We tried to compare the two and I
>
> found the students had more interest in what I brought instead of what is in the
>
> book (FA1 lines 402-410).

Another faculty member commented, "The concepts were good. It was probably not the

best way of presenting the material (FA1 lines 420-421)." A final faculty member shared

that the case studies allowed students to relate to the story:

I think that CLS text is one of the framework pieces as it tells stories about

people's lives and those stories are meant to be applicable to our students. They

are meant to help the student find that connection; no you are not alone (FA2 lines

330-332).

Chapter exercises. A faculty member could not incorporate all exercises but did

find value in them. The comment stated was, "A lot of the exercises are very helpful but

again, you kind of have to pick and choose because there are so many (FA1 lines 424-

425)." Another faculty member shared that he or she thought the exercises were a good

starting point to creating supplemental instructional materials by stating:

I would say the exercises in the book are a good resource. I didn't feel that I had

to use an exercise every class period but they were good resources and once you

get to know who the students are it gives you a launching point to say … in terms

of a supplement or something that I think is going to connect a little differently.

At least it starts you off in that direction in my opinion (FA1 lines 497-502).

Faculty Orientation

In order to effectively teach these learning outcomes, it was necessary for faculty

to have a deep understanding of the curriculum, the textbook, the college, the students

and the contribution this course has on the student success. A subcategory that should be

noted resides around the faculty orientation session and materials. One question posed to

faculty participants was, "Did you feel prepared to teach CLS100 after attending

orientation?" Five faculty participants indicated they attended but did not feel prepared

and three did not attend an orientation.

Those that did attend noted not feeling as though it was a training to prepare them to be successful with the course content. One faculty member shared, "It was more meeting some of the other people who had taught the class previously and who were going to teach it the same semester. I didn't see it as training at all (FA1 lines 70-72)." An additional faculty member shared:

Specifically being prepared following the orientation, probably not completely. I think that there was a lot more that could have been done … I don't think either one of those goes into the depth of student development pieces, into career pieces, and into some of the technological pieces in terms of the additional technological resources that are available as a part of the book that we have chosen to use. I think that those pieces are missing from the orientation (FA1 lines 23-33).

An additional faculty member shared, "I did attend the session and they did give us numerous amounts of training on it but nothing prepares you like being actually in the classroom (FA2 lines 29-30)." An additional faculty member stated that he/she thought more was going to come after the orientation to prepare them, he/she commented:

That thing that we were calling orientation… really felt more like a time that was trying to sell the class, like trying to sell people to be faculty versus teaching us how to be faculty for that class. I felt like when I went to that, that it was just an overview of what the class would be and that there would be more to come and then there wasn't. ... That part was more challenging so I felt sort of prepared for the content but not really prepared for the course (FA1 lines 57-68).

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Another faculty member shared that training for faculty is instrumental to students gaining skills from CLS100:

> I don't think all of our students get a fair shake at getting as much out of the course as they can. In my opinion, it needs to be more of a kit. You become part of this class, get a training, and you have some very specific things that yes, you have some freedom here but yes there are some specific guidelines and expectations and you can meet these requirements in that way. I think that the faculty training piece is huge (FA1 lines 703-708).

A final faculty member commented that the faculty orientation and training resided around if this course becomes mandatory for students by stating:

> Those are going to be important pieces in the sense of the training necessary for the faculty to teach the course. I think that there are some pieces that are missing there in the sense if it is going to be meaningful and for a greater number of students then you have got to do the work as far as prepping and training the faculty (FA1 lines 695-698).

Further, the curriculum for CLS100 has many facets to it. A faculty member noted about the curriculum:

> I think the curriculum is intense. … Truly to get through the entire book and all of the information and just spend some time helping them get comfortable with the college and what college is all about and all of those pieces, it is not really possible (FA1 lines 86-97).

Another faculty member commented:

> I felt like there was a lot of content and ….I tried to figure out what my students
> wanted to learn about and we talked about the different topics that were covered
> in the book and they kind of did a ranking of their top interest points. Then I
> completely took the book and I tore all of the chapters out and re-arranged it in an
> order based on importance for them (FA1 lines 99-103).

Data Analysis

A syllabus is a contract between the professor and the student as it provides the
expectations, assignments, measurements, and desired outcomes. McKeachie and
Svinicki (2011) indicated, "like a contract, a syllabus should help students understand
both their responsibilities and yours (p. 15)." These authors further stated that there is no
one model for the construction of a syllabus. However, they also stated, "be clear about
when and how learning will be assessed. What students do is strongly influenced by their
anticipation of the ways learning will be evaluated (p. 17)."

Ten randomly selected syllabi by GRCC were provided to establish if the learning
outcomes were clearly identified on each. To protect the anonymity of the instructor
responsible for the creation of the syllabi, all names and contact information were
extracted prior to providing as part of the research study. Of the ten syllabi provided, nine
clearly indicated the learning outcomes by titling them either Course Objectives or
Course Outcomes.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results of the data analysis of the
student and faculty focus groups related to this study. The results identified five

categories as perceived by students and faculty about the most important curricular

elements that lead to student persistence. These categories also produced several

subcategories in these findings. Categories and subcategories were cross-compared

between new and experienced students and student and faculty groups. These categories

were then compared to the CLS100 course learning outcomes during deductive analysis.

There were several subcategories that were added beyond the stated CLS00 learning

outcomes in order to fully address the themes generated during coding and data analysis.

Based on these findings, the desired curricular components for CLS100 at GRCC

will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

Community college enrollments have seen a tremendous increase and have made vast strides in providing access and opportunity to higher education; however, very little has been done to improve student success or college completion. The average persistence rate at two-year colleges between 1982-2010, freshman to sophomore years, was 56 percent and completion rates for those who graduated in three years or less was 28 percent (ACT, 2010). These rates have caused student persistence and completion to be at the forefront of several national initiatives and community colleges have been reasoned as the institutions to accomplish these completion agendas.

To combat dismal student success rates, institutions have developed an array of intervention strategies to increase persistence, transfer and graduation rates such as first-year experience courses and programs. First-year experience courses have been part of academic curriculum at American colleges for over 100 years (USC, 2012). The most prominent and widely recognized first-year experience effort was South Carolina's University 101 course, introduced in 1972.

While first-year experience courses have been at the forefront of an abundant amount of literature, it was typically found in a four-year setting with four-year institution students. The curriculum of a first-year experience again is designed to guide a student through the transition process from high school to college through a multifaceted pedagogical approach. Braxton (2000) espouses that curriculum structure and pedagogy invariably shape both student learning and persistence. Although there has been research conducted on first-year experience course curriculum, no one curriculum has been developed to support this initiative toward moving the completion needle. Further, the research that has been conducted on first-year experience curriculum lacks the input of faculty and students who have experienced it. This research supported the determination of what critical curricular components lead to community college student success, especially in a community college setting by acquiring the voice of both faculty and students.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the benefits of a first-year experience course curriculum at GRCC as it related to student persistence. Perceptions of new and experienced students as well as faculty of the first-year experience course curriculum as it contributed to student success were discovered. The participants' perceptions were then used to guide recommendations for curricular enhancements. New and experienced students are defined as:

New Student- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted the next semester. The "new" students in this study are first time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 fall 2012 and persisted to winter 2013.

Experienced Student- Students who took first-year experience course (CLS100) and persisted for one or more years. The 'experienced' students are first time community college students who successfully completed CLS100 during or before the fall 2011 semester and persisted fall 2012.

Through the use of a constructivist epistemological approach to this qualitative study the researcher examined the perceptions that students and faculty constructed for themselves following their experience with the CLS100 curriculum. The study drew from focus group interview methodology and documents as sources for analysis. Since the study analyzed a community college course it was important to bring in information from individuals who have had exposure and experience with the course. This study was based on the belief that the students and faculty had unique and individual experiences with the CLS100 curriculum.

New and experienced students as well as faculty were invited via email to participate in focus groups. Several email iterations took place to acquire participants. Due to the lack of response from both new and experienced students, an alternate approach was taken to seek participation. The researcher reached out to the course instructors to seek assistance in supporting the researchers need for participants. Several instructors contacted students via email or personal contact to encourage participation. This support increased the number of participants. This faculty to student contact to produce an outcome is an indication of the positive impact that CLS100 has on relationship building for students with their respective faculty.

Findings and Recommendations

The design of this study was predicated on one central question; What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced student's persistence at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC)?

Categories of themes were generated through an inductive analysis of focus group transcripts and facilitator notes produced from interviews with new and experienced students and full and part-time faculty. These categories were then compared to the CLS100 course learning outcomes during deductive analysis. The CLS100 course learning outcomes that matched during analysis were utilized as the framework of the study. The model of themes is presented in Table 4.

Table 4	
Themes	
Categories	Thematic Topics
Academic Integration	• High School vs. College • Adult vs. Traditional Aged • Strategies for Success
College Services Integration	• College Services • College Service Personnel
Skill Development	• Learning vs. Lecture Styles • Note-taking, Test-taking and Study Skills • Procrastination • Stress Management • Communication Skills • Technology • Time Management • Writing • Finance • Diversity
Social Integration	• Peer to Peer • Student to Faculty • Outside of the Classroom
Academic and Career Planning	• Strategies for Establishing Academic and Career Goals

Completion of the CLS100 appeared to influence student persistence. The level of influence is not entirely clear because the participants' perceptions differed from group to group and participant to participant. The strongest categorical links between both new and experienced students that helped them to be retained was through College Service Integration and Social Integration. In comparison faculty indicated the categories of Academic and Career Planning and Social Integration as the primary curricular associations to student persistence. However, faculty clearly stated that student persistence is not totally predicated on the curriculum of CLS100. The categorical themes outlined in the above table will be discussed in the next section.

The categorical themes outlined in the above table as well as the identified recommendations for practice or policy enhancements for GRCC are discussed in depth throughout the remainder of this chapter. Table 5 below outlines the recommendations as related to the five primary categories derived in this study.

Table 5

Categorical Recommendations

Category	Thematic Topic	Recommendation
Academic Integration	Transition	• High school to college • Adult students • Pedagogical mix
College Service Integration	Orientation	• Link CLS100 and new student orientation • NSO team membership • Reference Sheet • Scavenger hunt exercise
Skill Development	• Writing • Stress management • Technology • Finance • Diversity	• Integrate tutoring and formatting • Central repository for materials and tour • Introduction to required technology • SALT financial literacy • Thematic curriculum development
Social Integration	• Peer to peer • Student to faculty • Non-classroom	• Mentorship • 1x1's and exit interviews • Required participation
Academic and Career Planning	Goal Establishment	• Career assessment/exploration • Transfer • My Degree Path

Academic Integration. This first category included topics relating to understanding the expectations in and differences of college. The results of the study identified subcategories of understanding differences between high school and college, differences between adult versus traditional aged student learning and needs; and the establishment of success strategies.

Community colleges serve a wide variety of ages. According to AACC (2013) 39 percent of community college students are under the age of 21 while the average age is 28. With 39 percent of community college students being traditional aged there is a need

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for students to understand the differences in expectations and rigor from high school to college. Student and faculty talked about the transition challenges when a student is coming directly from high school. Students mostly discussed that a lot of students treat college like high school and that is when they get into academic trouble. One new student commented:

> A lot of people told me when I was coming to CC, it was like, oh, it is like 13th grade, and it is so easy. I was like slapped in the face the first month because I just didn't expect it at all and this class definitely helped me figure it out (lines NS1 231-233).

The findings of this study support the necessity to incorporate the differences between high school and college into the curriculum to help first-year students adjust.

Adjustment matters were not only an issue for traditional aged students, it was also apparent through listening to discussion that it impacted adult learners as well. Making the transition to college requires students the wherewithal to negotiate challenges and influences in their lives external of the college environment. With the average age of students being 28 years of age there are definitely differences in acclimating students academically. Non-traditional students often face the same barriers to success as at-risk students (Myran, 2008). Laanan (2003) stated that typically these adult learners have "…anxiety, guilt, and fear upon returning to the classroom (as cited by Myran, 2008, p. 6)." Adult students discussed being unsure what to expect when taking courses with younger students. An experienced student recalled:

> I started school not knowing if I was going to fit in being a little older. …It has taught me that that I have stayed at GRCC because CLS has made my mind be a

little more open to go to school with the younger kids and people older even (ES3 lines 128-133).

Another adult student stated the need to learn to balance home and school. He/she stated:

…I swore up and down that I had hours on hours on end to do things and I realized once breaking it down that I spend time with my kids, making dinner, homework checking, and I am realizing that I am ending up with this small amount of time to do me and it was affecting my grades (NS2 lines 152-156).

Techniques to assist high school students and adult learners to transition into higher education are a recommendation for curricular enhancement.

In the fall of 2011, AACC reported that 45 percent of community college students are first time in college. These students do not have an understanding of what it takes to be successful in college. Many new student participants discussed the need to be academically motivated in order to succeed in college. As discussed in Chapter 2, Tinto's (1993) model includes commitment issues as an individual cause for departure. He stated that commitment is the student's motivation or effort toward achieving a goal. Often if students do not come with a goal in mind, a clear commitment to their educational goals or the institution, they will depart before completing.

Motivation was further associated with getting good grades and setting personal goals by students. A large body of literature indicated that first-year experience courses have a positive impact on student academic and social integration, acquisition of higher grades and persistence (Porter and Swing, 2006). However, Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot and Associates (2005) stated that as educational leaders we need to shift students away

from the extrinsic motivations for learning to get the grade point average as many are focused on the grades rather than learning. Further, 40 percent of community college students are the first in their family to attend college so they lack the support structures to motivate them (AACC, 2013). Upcraft, et al. (2005) stated that the model of faculty members who create knowledge and supply it through lectures no longer supports the student of today. From the findings of this study, a mix of pedagogical approaches incorporated into CLS100 to include student participation, intentional faculty to student interaction, writing about learning, group activities, supplemental instructional materials, guest speakers and experiential learning is supported.

College Services Integration. This second category included topics relating to understanding services areas and the value of each. The results of the study identified subcategories of college services and college service personnel assimilation.

Assisting students with adjusting to their new environment is a goal of CLS100. First-year experience courses offer a benefit unlike other courses to not only take proactive steps to acclimating students but also as a venue for developing awareness of the student and institutional roles, rights and responsibilities in the college environment.

Student participants discussed at length the benefits of a scavenger hunt exercise in CLS100 as a mechanism to gaining an understanding of the various service departments and their respective purposes. They used phrases such as, "I would have no idea…", "more comfortable" and "it was really helpful" when discussing their perspectives of the scavenger hunt. Faculty also noted that it was their role as educators to acclimate students to the institution and service areas.

As outlined in Chapter 2, Vincent Tinto (1993) stated that there are institutional effects that lead to student departure through incongruence. Incongruence is defined as, "individuals perceive themselves at odds with the institution (p. 50)." Students need assistance in trying to figure out this new environment and the intricacies of the operations of higher education including the purpose of service offices, locations and personnel. Kay McClenney, director of Center for Community College Student Engagement, has stated on numerous occasions, "students don't do optional (Fain, 2013, n.p.)." By requiring the scavenger hunt exercise as part of the curriculum, the college is serving students well in being more comfortable on campus and acquiring knowledge of available resources.

The findings of this study support the continuation of the scavenger hunt and campus tours to acclimate students to college services. Further, it was recommended by a student for the development of a reference sheet that outlines the various service areas, locations and purposes in addition to the scavenger hunt.

Both students and faculty identified a missing link between new student orientation and the CLS100 curriculum. Faculty recommended strengthening the link between the CLS100 curriculum and the New Student Orientation (NSO) program in order to navigate the college more effectively. Students also commented on believing they were going to learn about various service departments and their purpose but were disappointed this did not occur through their attendance at NSO. Although it is recommended to link this course curriculum to CLS100, it should not be the substitute of a robust orientation program to integrate students with college services and personnel; they should complement each other. Further, the use of the scavenger hunt exercise as a

mechanism to affirm the learning that took place during New Student Orientation tour could be beneficial to students.

Further, having an experienced faculty member or director over the CLS100 curriculum as part of the New Student Orientation Development Team is imperative to create an effective connection. Further by having this link, redundancy can be avoided.

Skill Development. This third category included topics relating to academic skill development. Based on the results of the study the following subcategories were identified as areas of development including learning preferences, note-taking, procrastination, stress management, technology, test-taking, time management, and writing skills. Critical thinking, finance and diversity were less noted as findings in this study. Further, communication skills are outlined in the Social Integration section of these categories.

The initial first few weeks of a first-year experience course focus on social integration into the college environment. After that time, academic skill development begins. Increased rigor of college attributes to students choosing to depart without putting forth the effort to meet academic standards to avoid failure. The skills that are developed through first-year experiences courses can assist with combating that departure.

Common sense, as it relates to the CLS100 curriculum as well as the approved course textbook, was discussed by both students and faculty but on differing levels. A new student stated that the course lacked new learning:

> **…** throughout the class I'm not even sure we learned anything that was like
> drastically new. A lot of the stuff we already knew but it just gave us a much
> better focus on everything and kind of helped us to reevaluate what to do in

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each situation instead of just taking it all in at the same time (NS1 lines 131-134).

While this student indicated lack of rigor in the curriculum, another called the homework "superfluous (NS1 line 432)" and other students felt it was difficult on some levels. Finding balance in rigor with the diverse student population must be inherent within the CLS100 curriculum.

Faculty voiced concern that the textbook and curriculum being developed under the guise of being common sense. The topic of common sense resulted in extensive faculty conversation whether it exists or not for students. A faculty member shared:

…although there is great benefit in the course, if the students are really into it and apply that, I think some of it, to me, is written at such at a level that is common sense so they don't take it very serious (FA1 lines 130-132).

Another faculty member noted their first semester experience in teaching CLS100 as it related to the level the textbook was written seemed to imply common sense. The comment was:

I think I struggled my first semester because I agree and think it was really written common sense. I had to step back and try to figure out where they were because some of it wasn't common sense for all of them. I had to try to figure out which parts they found value in (FA1 lines 209-212).

Final comments by faculty member indicated that student common sense cannot be assumed, one faculty member commented, "what we think is common sense is not common sense to most of our students, even our brightest students (FA1 lines 270-272)."

This faculty member further explained that teaching honors students supported this theory, as these students had no idea how to calculate a GPA or the need to apply for financial aid each year. Another faculty member reminded faculty that," I think sometimes it is hard when you get high up in academia that you realize things that you think are common sense are not common sense (FA2 lines 524-525)."

Because community college students are diverse in academic preparedness and need, as well as first-year experience courses being traditionally taught by faculty who teach another discipline, it is important to allow for flexibility within the curriculum to determine what student skills are in need of development. However, guidance is necessary for faculty on what primary and secondary curriculum is to be integrated into their course. This could be instituted at the faculty orientation. Because common sense as, it relates to community college students, seemed to be misunderstood by faculty, this area is in need of being addressed at faculty orientation program.

The following topics were identified as areas of value in the curriculum. The first area was around understanding the difference between a student's personal learning style and that of a faculty lecture style.

Learning versus lecture styles. First-year experience courses assist students in developing a greater understanding of themselves. By incorporating a variety of assessment instruments, students indicated they acquired a better understanding of their learning styles and were then able to connect that style to the instructor lecture styles to gain a better grasp of the material being taught. Because of the multi-modes of student learning styles, it is important to create the CLS100 curriculum to be taught to each learning style to equally engage all learners.

Note-taking, test-taking and study skills. Note-taking, test-taking and study strategies are other crucial components to include into CLS100 curriculum. Although little commentary took place by students and faculty around these skill developmental areas, students that did comment on enhancing their skills in these areas through CLS100 experience. Experienced students primarily spoke of note-taking skill acquisition as it related to their college success. New students spoke to the importance of each of these topics as everyone has different styles so understanding what those are is essential to student success.

Procrastination. Procrastination impacts students in many ways. Many students feel they work better under pressure. However, first-year students do not have the ability to understand that in certain weeks of the semester, they may not have the ability to complete the required work successfully. Further, a student can be impacted financially if he or she put off dropping a class after a predetermined date for a refund or worse yet, required to reimburse the college as it relates to federal financial aid. A student also could fail a course if he or she does not solve academic matters in a timely fashion. New and experienced students commented on the strategies they acquired through the curriculum to help combat or curb their procrastination. The bottom line is that academic procrastination is a threat to college success and students must be taught strategies and the impact of their decisions to procrastinate. CLS100 is the course most suited to engage students in understanding why they procrastinate, the impact of it and strategies to overcome it. Further, connecting academic and career procrastination is also an opportunity within the CLS100 curriculum as in both cases it can impact success.

Stress management. Students discussed the benefit of CLS100 to provide strategies to alleviate emotional wellness in the areas of stress, anxiety, and depression. Bean and Eaton (2001-2002) reviewed a psychological model of student retention. In their model they identified the foundations as psychological processes of academic and social integration are present including the ability to possess the coping behaviors as it relates to adjust to or fit with an environment. Experienced students primarily spoke to this topic. A benefit to exposing students to emotional wellness strategies promotes a student's ability to establish healthy relationships and personal habits, create self-awareness, and gain coping mechanisms.

Students must be taught that physical wellness is a matter of individual responsibility as well as an understanding of the impact personal wellness has on academic potential. The new college environment can increase students to make poor health choices around alcohol and tobacco use, sleep patterns, and exercise regimes. Students briefly discussed health and wellness; however, there was no commentary on getting a tour of the Ford Fieldhouse as an introduction to exercise as a healthy lifestyle. A recommendation would be to include the introduction to the fitness facility into the scavenger hunt exercise and established tour for CLS100. Further, having a centralized location for all wellness related materials and activities on campus would be a way to promote student involvement and awareness.

Technology. Technology is becoming increasingly important as a requisite student skill. In this study, experienced students and faculty discussed the need to have this skill integrated into the CLS100 curriculum. Experienced students, primarily adult learners, indicated that they lacked the level of exposure to technology as traditional aged students.

Many colleges are increasing the number of online course offerings; however, if a student does not possess the basic computer skills to succeed in that environment, they will fail. Further, many traditional classes and institutional processes include the necessity to utilize technology in a self-sufficient manner. This includes components such as word processing, course content management systems (i.e., Blackboard), student self-service for enrollment management, financial aid and records, as well as email communication systems. Today's student is hindered in their success if he or she does not possess technical skills. CLS100 is the ideal place to introduce not only basic technical skills but also provide exercises to allow familiarity of specific applications (i.e.: Blackboard) to support student persistence.

Time management. Time management is notably one of the most essential skills needed for students as they enter this new college environment with different expectations and academic rigor. In the fall of 2011, AACC reported that 59 percent of community college students were enrolled at a part-time status. In addition, AACC reported that 16 percent of students are single parents. CCSSE reported that of the part-time students, 42 percent of them work 30 hours or more per week. These behaviors cause students to have competing agendas for their time so the curriculum of CLS100 contributes to establishing the ability to prioritize the many facets of their lives.

Writing. Students and faculty identified writing as an area requiring basic skill development. One faculty member commented on stressing the importance to students that reading and writing are two skills you cannot avoid in college so exposing them in CLS100 in ways they will utilize them in other college courses is suitable to supporting student persistence. Students also noted writing as a skill they utilized in their CLS100

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course. Some noted the benefit of writing while others noted there being less value. This was primarily in the area of journal writing. However, writing through learning has been identified as a key curricular component of a first-year experience course. Students may have noted reluctance in maintaining writing in the curriculum because their academic writing abilities may be lacking. A recommendation is the requirement of integrated tutorial writing services into the CLS100 curriculum. Further, students should be provided assignments that require proper academic writing formatting (i.e.: APA or MLA) to provide the ability to practice and start to develop these skills. Both of these recommendations may be beneficial to students' academic success.

  Finance. Although little commentary took place about finance, financial literacy is a recommended curricular enhancement area as it relates to student skill development. CCSSE (2012) reported that 73 percent of faculty and 49 percent of students indicated that finances will likely or very likely be a factor that would contribute to a student dropping a class or leaving college (CCCSE, 2012). In this study there was no commentary from students on this skill acquisition and faculty primarily noted utilizing an external source through the credit union to supplement instruction on finance. To enhance student persistence, a financial literacy component should be built into the curriculum of CLS100. One recommendation is to require students to sign up for the new SALT program through the new GRCC partnership with American Student Assistance to integrate curricular components to enhance financial education, engage in debt management tools, seek scholarships and receive financial counseling.

  Diversity. Commentary took place around diversity but lacked depth as well as learning through dialogue. The final curricular area to be enhanced is to intentionally

embed diversity experiences and exposure. Community colleges possess a very diverse student population inclusive of age, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, veterans, academic ability, disabilities and international students. The primary source of student diversity engagement was with the diversity lecture series and there was very little commentary on these experiences. However, those that did comment truly enjoyed the experience. If attendance at the lecture series is a course requirement, there would be value in allowing class time for students to converse about lessons learned or to discuss areas where viewpoints may not have aligned with the speaker or the lecture topic.

There are several thematic curricular components that could be developed for faculty to integrate within their course. Examples include poverty and homelessness, racial discrimination, non-English speakers, religion, human rights, sexuality and gender and equity and justice. Further, experiential learning integration allows for a service component to be inherent into the curriculum. A core value of the institution is diversity; therefore, it must be inclusive of the curriculum.

Social Integration. This fourth category included topics relating to integration through social engagement. The study resulted in the following topics of social integration through peer-to-peer, faculty to student and non-classroom activities.

Peer to peer. The student voice was clear that they were concerned over the issue of getting to know their peers and establishing relationships in order to feel more comfortable in college. Several students noted the desire to have additional group work added to the curriculum to enhance relationship building. An experienced student commented:

I think that there should be group activities because when you are a first time

student or going back, you are like a little fish in a big sea. Why not do a group

project and bond with them or something like that (ES3 lines 145-157)?

Mentorship is an area that falls outside of the learning outcomes but was noted by

a student and a faculty member as a mechanism to motivate and assist in persistence. A

faculty member noted requiring mentorship as part of their curriculum. However, one

student desired this as an addition to the course that would lead to enhanced student

success by having stated:

Maybe if the class did something where it was they had successful students who

had maybe taken that class before kind of come back and be sort of someone you

can talk to, like a mentor, big sister/little sister kind of thing (NS1 lines 351-353).

Many first-year experience courses include peer teaching and role models.

Students may feel more comfortable in seeking advice or asking questions of a peer

rather than a college professor or administrator. Based on this finding, it is recommended

that CLS100 integrate a mentorship component into the curriculum to enhance student

motivation, persistence, and success.

Student to faculty. Social integration through faculty to student interaction was also

an area that was lacking in the current curriculum according to students. An experienced

student commented the desire to add additional one-on-one time with their instructor by

stating, "Maybe some extra one-on-one type of thing, more or less. I know we had a one-

on-one thing at the end of the class. I think she should have one at the beginning, middle,

and end (ES2 lines 94-96)." As discussed in Chapter 2, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)

in their book *How College Affects Students* proposed that interaction with faculty and other institutional experiences impacts the student's satisfaction with the institution as well as impacts first to second year persistence at the institution. When students were asked if they had one-on-one time with their professor during their CLS100 course, most noted they did not. Further, students indicated the appreciation of their faculty member to not only care how they are doing in their class but also other classes. An experienced student stated, "The professor was really great about checking in with us and making sure, not just in her class, but we were good in all of our classes (ES1 lines 40-41)."

Based on the findings of this study, a recommendation would be to integrate one or two scheduled one-on-one meetings during the semester between the student and CLS100 faculty member. These meetings could be linked to the college success plan, a middle semester check-in with each student on overall academic progress or during midterm exams when pressures are elevated; or the institution could implement exit interviews with each student as an end of the semester activity.

Outside of the classroom. Social integration through non-classroom activity also supports student success. As discussed in Chapter 2, Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) supports the notion that the more a student is involved, the more likely they will be retained. Several student participants discussed the benefits of involvement with honors program, student organizations and attendance at college events through the CLS100 course. Through this involvement students stated they felt more comfortable with the institution, learned more about topics and that the CLS100 course provided incentive to become active. An experienced student noted:

… I actually work with [faculty name] in student organizations here too so that

got me active in those as well. I feel that just being in CLS with him taught me a

lot and just got me out there on the campus (ES2 lines 263-265).

Several student learning outcomes enable the curriculum to engage students in

non-classroom activities. Based on the findings of this study, there would be great benefit

to students to require participation in at least one non-classroom activity to enhance

student development and engagement.

Academic and Career Planning. This fifth and final category included topics

relating to academic and career planning. Based on the results of the study, strategies for

establishing academic and career goals were identified as the primary subcategory.

Students believe that guiding them through the expectations of what it takes to be

successful in college and the establishment of goals will benefit them in being more

prepared and motivated to succeed in this new environment. Students discussed at length

that the establishment of goals, a sense of direction and a plan to get there was important

to their college success. As outlined in Chapter 2, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) sixth

vector of change is titled Developing Purpose, which indicates that providing students

with the tools to know where they are going in order to set and explore goals contributes

to students' ability to be successful in college. The authors indicate that these vectors of

change strive to develop a student's whole person and not simply their intellectual

competence.

The college success plan was identified as the primary curricular exercise to

establishing an academic and career plan. A learning outcome is dedicated to this student

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development as identified in the requirement to "construct a college success plan and initial career plan."

Students talked of the long-term value of developing a college success plan. A new student commented:

> …it was part of our final project and it like helped us know where we want to go and know exactly what we were going to be doing and about the job that we picked and a lot of details about it (NS2 lines 262-264).

Another new student stated:

> What I gained is that I understand myself a little bit more. I understand that now I can say with certainty what I want to do, what my plan and my goal and my path is going to be to get there. It just gave me a feeling of security. I felt like I was secure in my decisions (NS2 lines 257-260).

Academic and career planning were not discussed at length by faculty. However, the value of this plan to students is apparent. Students were asked if they reviewed or intended to review the college success plan they developed in CLS100. Three new students and four experienced students indicated they had or will utilize their college success plan in the future.

Dedication was also discussed by students in order to succeed academically. Tinto's 1993 revised model included intentions as a reason that students depart college. Intentions relate to why students chose to go to college as well as why a particular institution. Not all students attend college with the intention of completing a degree, particularly community college students. Clarity and specificity of intentions is important

to understand. Tinto found that three out of every four students experience some form of uncertainty, especially during the first-year. If a student does not come to college with specific intentions and is uncertain, the likelihood they will persist is low. The students in this study discussed how they came to college with the goal in mind to succeed. However, they did not know how to get there or understand what success meant to them personally.

The findings of this study exemplify that in order to be successful in college a student must be guided toward establishment of personal goals and plans. CLS100 is a perfect opportunity to enhance academic advising and career counseling. Students come to community colleges for a variety of reasons including to acquire job-related skills for career advancement, certificate, associate's degree or to transfer to a four-year university. The curriculum of CLS100 course could greatly benefit students by incorporating career exploration and the academic path required to reach career goals. The benefit to students would be to avoid self-advising errors as self-advisement causes frustration, wastes time and money and is an area that students do not understand the dangers. One particular area noted by several students to be added or enhanced in the CLS100 curriculum is around learning of the nuances of transferring to another institution. Therefore, incorporating transferring and the exploration of the differences of college majors and careers would be beneficial if established into the curriculum in an intentional way.

A strong recommendation would be to revisit the area of career and academic planning to include more depth on career exploration and transfer. Having a clearly identified career path was clearly stated as a motivational factor by students. Therefore, incorporating career assessment and exploration into the curriculum is recommended.

Many students indicated that transfer was an area of confusion and anxiety resulting in the need for further exploration. A possible solution would be to require students to create a Student Success Plan through My Degree Path and follow-up with an academic advising appointment to review during the course of the semester. This would be a very concrete way for students to engage in creating their own academic path with the guidance and support of an Academic Advisor.

Sub Research Questions

The previous section was dedicated to the findings of this research study that focused on answering the primary research question. This section is dedicated to answering the four secondary research questions of:

1. Are there differences in the perceptions of new and experienced students about what topics taught in CLS100 curriculum that contributed toward their ability to persist?

2. How do students and faculty differ in their perceptions of the topics of the CLS100 curriculum that contribute toward student persistence?

3. What do faculty and students perceive to be present in the CLS100 curriculum that make it less meaningful?

4. What do faculty and students perceive to be missing in the CLS100 curriculum to make it more meaningful?

Upon analysis of the data, differences were discovered between new and experienced students of the curriculum that lead to their persistence:

*   New Students primarily commented on the need to be motivated.

*   Health/wellness skills were discussed by new students.

- Technology skills were only discussed by experienced students.

- Experienced students primarily discussed writing activities, mainly journal writing.

- Time management skills were primarily noted by new students.

- More new students discussed the need for coping strategies to alleviate stress, depression and anxiety.

There were also differences that existed between faculty and students and their perceptions of the most important aspects of the curriculum:

- Faculty only noted the importance of reading skill development.

- Communication skills were only discussed by faculty.

- Note-taking skills were only discussed by students.

- Health and Wellness skills were only discussed by students.

- Only faculty mentioned Finance skills.

- Acquisition of good grades as a motivator was only discussed by students.

- Time management was discussed by students, only one faculty member commented.

What do faculty and students perceive to be present in the CLS100 curriculum that make it less meaningful?

- Several students commented on the need to write journals as not helpful.

- Both faculty members and students noted that some of the homework, case studies and chapter exercises were not necessary.

- Differing opinions between students and faculty on the impact of the *Focus on Community College Success* textbook.

There were notable differences between what faculty and students perceive to be missing in the CLS100 curriculum to make it more meaningful:

- Technology skills were indicated as a missing component by both faculty and experienced students.

- Students desired the addition or increased amount of faculty to student one on one time.

- Students and faculty commented that there should be a connection between New Student Orientation and College Learning Studies in support of Social Integration.

- Faculty felt they provided group work opportunities to socially integrate students; however, several students noted wanting more group activities.

- New and experienced students commented on expanding information on transferring.

- Mentorship was stated as something to be added by a new student. Only one faculty commented that they require mentorship as part of the college success plan.

Other Recommendations

This research study sought to understand the student and faculty perceptions of the most important curricular elements that lead to student persistence. There were several subcategories beyond the stated CLS100 learning outcomes that added richness to the study that could not be ignored. These subcategories were added to fully address the themes generated during coding and data analysis. The study rendered the following recommendations to support sub-categorical findings of learning outcome assessment and instruction as outlined in Table 6.

Table 6

Other Recommendations

Research Implication	Recommendation
Learning Outcome Assessment	Further vet the learning outcomes of CLS100 with faculty and integrate further into the curriculum.
Instruction	Enhance recruitment, hiring, orientation, mentorship and professional development of CLS100 professors.

Learning Outcome Assessment. Assessment of student learning produces action by either maintaining or changing educational strategies. This study sought to derive the student and faculty perceptions about the CLS100 curriculum. These perceptions were then analyzed through the lens of the approved student learning outcomes in order to produce evidence of learning. Swing (2003) stated, "Assessment efforts that are properly timed, orchestrated, and explained to participants are more likely to produce trustworthy data and outcomes (p. 3)." The findings of this study suggest that the learning outcomes have not been fully vetted by the faculty or the institution as far as fulfilling them through the curriculum. A faculty member participant stated:

> The student learning outcomes need to be developed and they need to be shared
>
> with all of the faculty members and they need an assessment or two, a pre-
>
> assessment, an end assessment or something so that every CLS course, we can
>
> continue to measure our effectiveness across each course but to have each
>
> individual faculty member trying to do that, I don't think will ever work (FA1
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> lines 732-736).

This comment supports the need for assessment strategies to be further enhanced and broadly shared with faculty responsible for the delivery of the CLS100 curriculum. The learning outcomes that lacked comment or depth in this study are:

1. Learning Outcome 4 as it relates to Skill Development category of reading, memory building and critical thinking.

2. Learning Outcome 6 as it relates to Skill Development around diversity.

3. Learning Outcome 7 as it relates to Skill Development of interpersonal communication skills and group activities as well as finance.

4. Learning Outcome 8 as it relates to Skill Development in the areas of technology.

5. Learning Outcome 9 as it relates to Academic and Career planning in relationship to understanding the transfer processes.

6. Learning Outcome 10 as it relates to College Service Integration lacked depth with non-classroom integration with student clubs and organizations.

Instruction. The instructors of CLS100 definitely made an impact on the student participants. Several students commented on the value of having a counselor as their instructor as well as a college administrator. However, there was student commentary of not having a good experience with an adjunct instructor. The experienced student shared: I felt like CLS did not help me. I mean it was only based on the teacher. I think with a different teacher, it would have been a lot better. With the teacher, I just felt lost and I just felt really crappy (ES3 lines 74-76).

This student commentary supports assuring that the recruitment, hiring, orientation and development processes result in qualified instructors to support the student learning outcomes for CLS100. Faculty commented on not feeling prepared post

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the attendance at the CLS100 orientation. They noted that the orientation curriculum is in need of enhancement in the areas of student and career development and technology implications to student learning. Some commented that the orientation assisted them in setting up the course but not in the delivery. An area that could be enacted at the college is to pair a new CLS100 instructor with an instructor that has successfully taught the course to become a mentor. Learning from each other was noted as a benefit to these instructors through personal contact, content sharing and brown bag lunch series. Beyond orientation, continued professional development opportunities for CLS100 faculty should be initiated to provide faculty with a toolbox of active learning strategies, teaching diversity and inclusion, integration of academic support, understanding community college students, best practice review, social integration strategies and presentation techniques. If the college wanted to take CLS100 instruction seriously they could develop a certification process for faculty in the above areas identified.

Limitations and Future Research

The results of this study are based on participant perceptions and recollections of their experience with the CLS100 course. For some participants there was a lengthy time period since they took or taught the course. Therefore, these recollections may not be factual.

Involving both students and faculty to participate in this study was very intentional. However, the perceptions acquired from these participants may not be representative of the total population that had experienced with the CLS100 curriculum. Further, this study analyzed one large urban community college in Michigan. These

findings may not be demonstrative of community colleges of varying sizes, structures, settings or location.

Very little research exists on community college first-year experience courses. A study was conducted by Rebecca Ellington (2010) titled "Curriculum of an FYE Course at Community Colleges" where the primary research question sought to understand the important curricular topics that should be included in a first-year experience course and was conducted at four small rural community colleges. Ellington's recommendations for further research indicated the necessity for the study to be replicated at larger community colleges located in different settings. This study replicated portions of her study at a large urban community college including acquiring student and faculty perceptions on the important curricular topics. However, further research to enhance this research topic would be to conduct a similar study at more than one larger urban community college. By conducting this research there is opportunity to glean a more in-depth analysis of the needs of students in a variety of settings as it relates to topics for a first-year experience course that lead to student persistence.

Focus groups provide the opportunity to bring richness to a study. However, with the constraint of time, some participants may not have had the opportunity to contribute to the conversation to have their voice heard. Although there was great discussion on the various topics of a first-year experience course curriculum, there was no opportunity for participants to rank them in order of importance. Further research could be conducted to analyze these categorical findings to determine level of priority. A consideration would be to conduct a follow-up interview with particular participants to gather depth, clarification or priority ranking. An additional option would allow for a mixed methods

research approach study that not only conducted focus group interviews but also to engage in survey instrumentation with open ended comment sections to allow participants to speak more copiously and add a greater sense of priority to topics.

During the course of this study, the College Learning Studies 100 course became mandatory for degree seeking students entering GRCC winter 2014 with less than a 3.00 high school GPA. If a student is required to take CLS100, it must be taken the students' first semester at GRCC. This mandatory placement establishes the need for this study to be replicated with students who were required to take CLS100. Further, students voluntarily participated in this study as well as voluntary registered for CLS100. This limitation may result in these participants having a different viewpoint of the course than a student who will be mandated to take it in the future.

CLS100 instructors made a positive impression on students. Further research could be to analyze the stylistic differences of CLS100 instructors as well as how they incorporate various support systems inherent in CLS100 instructors. Such research could provide recommendations to inform best practices for hiring, recruitment and training of faculty who teach CLS100.

Discussion took place by faculty who taught CLS100 for honors, middle college and traditional college-level students. Future research needs to focus on how this course aided these differing student demographics as it relates to persistence and completion. Further research could determine if CLS100 is effectively serving students at varying academic and social levels.

Finally, the voices of the students that are no longer at GRCC are missing. These voices are of students who, despite enrolling in CLS100, left the institution prior to

successful completion. Understanding that students leave for a variety of reasons, it is an institutional desire that the reason be either graduation or transfer. However, there are many additional less than positive reasons for a student's departure. Further follow-up research is needed for those students that exited the institution prior to successfully completing CLS100 to acquire their reasons for leaving. If students left the institution for any reason other than transfer, that information would be beneficial to comparing to the differences of these students to those that persisted. Finally, if a student transferred, there would be benefit to gaining perspectives on the longer-term effect of the CLS100 curriculum that lead to their continued persistence.

All of this information would strengthen the CLS100 curriculum as it impacts overall student persistence and potentially advance the completion agenda for GRCC.

Reflections

I chose to study the effects of a first-year experience course at a community college for two reasons. The first was practical: when conducting a literature review, there was little research conducted on community college first-year experience courses. I found that personally concerning as community colleges are the gatekeepers to advanced degrees and their enrollment is increasing.

The second reason I chose to conduct this study was based on my own journey as a first generation college student. I wish that a first-year experience course had been available to me when I began my journey at a community college twenty-six years ago. In addition, having the opportunity to be an adjunct instructor to teach CLS100, I was passionate about acquiring a deeper understanding of the perceptions of both students and

faculty of the most important curricular topics they determined to contribute to student success.

As I reflect on this project I am grateful for each participant and their willingness to share their journey, perceptions and beliefs about the CLS100 curriculum. Having 23 participants allowed for this to be a rich and worthy study. Although I was unsure what to expect throughout the 14-15 interview questions with the seven focus groups, to my surprise I acquired great depth for transcription purposes. Although I must admit that the discussions did leave me with lengthy transcripts to review, which made the theming and coding process difficult, I am very pleased with the plethora of topics that I gleaned.

Throughout my process my decision was affirmed that focus group interviews were the proper way to gather the respective voices to be heard in this study. As students or faculty engaged with the questions and each other my confidence in the process grew. My role as a former Human Resources professional brought me further confidence as I have a strong ability to listen, learn, and establish further clarification to what is being stated. I think this brought credibility to me as a narrator as well.

There are a multitude of benefits to this study. GRCC has much to glean for enhancing the CLS100 curriculum to better serve students and increase persistence. Community colleges at large have much to learn about first-year experience courses and the impact on student persistence. Finally, the participants can take pride in knowing they have advanced a body of knowledge by sharing their perceptions about their curricular experiences with CLS100. Through their participation, GRCC is now better equipped to understand what is necessary to academically and socially integrate new students into their institution.

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APPENDIX

A: INVITATION TO STUDENTS

Invitation to Students to Participate in Focus Groups

Hello. My name is Lilly Anderson, and I am a doctoral student in the Ferris State University Doctorate of Community College Leadership Program. I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation entitled, "The Effect of First-year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College." I want to talk to students and faculty in order to find out their perceptions of skills needed for first-year students in order to stay at GRCC. As part of learning what these perceptions are I'm conducting focus group interviews. These interviews will be held with 8-10 students rather than one-on-one interviews. You have been identified as a potential participant in this study as you have successfully completed College Learning Studies (CLS100) and are currently enrolled at GRCC.

Times and dates for the focus groups have not been identified yet, but will be based on the schedules of the willing participants. The interview will consist of several questions and consume about 60 to 90 minutes.

If you are willing to participate, please respond via email at anderl21@ferris.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lilly Anderson
Doctoral Candidate
Ferris State University
Doctorate of Community College Leadership Program

APPENDIX

B: CONFIRMATION TO STUDENTS

Confirmation to Students Who Volunteered to Participate in Focus Group Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participant in a student focus group for the research being conducted for my dissertation entitled, *The Effect of First-year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College*

Times and dates for the focus groups have not been identified as ____ and are based on when the majority of the willing participants were able to attend. Again, the interview will consist of several questions and consume about 60 to 90 minutes. Upon completion of the interviews, l will analyze the responses for common themes and draw conclusions that will contribute to institutional decisions around curriculum enhancement and mandatory participation in CLS100 of future student attending Grand Rapids Community College.

The results of the study will be included in my dissertation to be defended to a committee at Ferris State University in the spring of 2013 and may be used in future published articles and professional presentations.

<u>Benefit of Participating in this Research</u>

Participation in this research provides you an opportunity to voice your beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the CLS100 curriculum as it contributed to your learning and retention at Grand Rapids Community College. Collectively, participant input has the potential to influence college faculty and leadership about the decision whether or not to mandate CLS100 for future new students at GRCC. There will be light refreshments and snacks provided at the interviews but there will be no monetary award for participation in the study.

<u>Anonymity/Confidentiality</u>

Your personal name will not be used in connection to your responses but rather coded and referred to as "Student – Roman Numeral" EX: "New Student IV or Experienced Student IV."

Risks of Participating in the Research

The risk of participation is minimal due to the anonymity provided to you as a participant.

Research Data

The interview will be audio taped and professionally transcribed for analysis. Audio recordings and transcripts will be securely maintained by me as the researcher and password protected.

Informed Consent

I will be sending you a follow-up email to arrange a time for the interview. The interviews will be held on the Main Campus of Grand Rapids Community College and will be scheduled when the majority of the willing participants are available. You will be asked to sign an informed consent form prior to the onset of the interview.

Attached you will find the approval allowing me to proceed with my research efforts issued by the Ferris State University and Grand Rapids Community College Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your participation will provide great value to the study. I will contact you by email in the near future to begin the scheduling process in hopes you'll consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Lilly Anderson
Doctoral Candidate
Ferris State University
Doctorate of Community College Leadership Program

APPENDIX

C: INVITATION TO FACULTY

Invitation to Faculty to Participate in Focus Group Interview

Dear *******,

     As you may or may not know, I am a doctoral student in the Ferris State University Doctorate of Community College Leadership Program. The title of my dissertation is *The Effect of a First-year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College*. The catalyst of the study is the First-year Experience Course, CLS100, at Grand Rapids Community College. The study is assuming a qualitative approach by conducting focus group interviews with students and faculty who have experienced the CLS100 curriculum. Because you have taught this course, I am inviting you to be a participant in this research study.

<div align="center">Research Overview</div>

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the short-term and long-term benefits of a first-year experience course at a community college as it relates to student success (retention).

The primary research question of this study is as follows:

    1.) What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced student persistence at Grand Rapids Community College?

The focus group interview will consist of several questions and consume about 60 to 90 minutes. Upon completion of the interviews, l will analyze the responses for common themes and draw conclusions that will contribute to institutional decisions around curriculum enhancement and mandatory participation in CLS100 of future student attending Grand Rapids Community College.

The results of the study will be included in my dissertation to be defended to a committee at Ferris State University in the spring of 2013 and may be used in future published articles and professional presentations.

Benefit of Participating in this Research

Participation in this research provides you an opportunity to voice your beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the CLS100 curriculum as it contributed to student learning and retention at Grand Rapids Community College. Collectively, participant input has the potential to influence curricular enhancements as well as inform college faculty and leadership about the decision whether or not to mandate CLS100 for future new students at GRCC. There will be light refreshments and snacks provided at the interviews but there will be no monetary award for participation in the study.

Anonymity/Confidentiality

Your personal name will not be used in connection to your responses but rather coded and referred to as "Faculty – Roman Numeral" EX: "Faculty IV."

Risks of Participating in the Research

The risk of participation is minimal due to the anonymity provided to you as a participant.

Research Data

The interview will be audio taped and professionally transcribed for analysis. Audio recordings and transcripts will be securely maintained by me as the researcher and password protected.

Informed Consent

I will be sending you a follow-up email to arrange a time for this focus group interview. The interviews will be held on the Main Campus of Grand Rapids Community College and will be scheduled when the majority of the willing participants are available. You will be asked to sign an informed consent form prior to the onset of the interview.

Attached you will find the approval allowing me to proceed with my research efforts issued by the Ferris State University and Grand Rapids Community College Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your participation will provide great value to the study. I will contact you by email in the near future to begin the scheduling process in hopes you'll voluntarily consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Lilly Anderson
Doctoral Candidate
Ferris State University
Doctorate of Community College Leadership Program

APPENDIX

D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study about first-year students at a community college. Lillian K. Anderson, a doctoral student at Ferris State University, is conducting this study. You have been asked to participate because this study examines faculty and student perceptions of success for first-year students who have experienced CLS100. We ask that you read this information and ask any questions prior to proceeding.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Grand Rapids Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

By signing this document, I understand the following:

- I am being interviewed as part of a qualitative study titled: *The Effect of a First-year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College.*

- My participation in this research will be through focus group interviews. I understand that these interviews will be audio taped and professionally transcribed in the form of a typed transcript intended for analysis. Audio recordings will be heard by the researcher and transcriptionist only and destroyed upon production of the transcript. Transcripts will be securely maintained by the researcher and password protected for a period of two years following the study, at which time they will be re-formatted and destroyed.

- My participation is completely voluntary, I may decline to answer any question(s) and I am free to withdraw at any time.

- My responses will be included in the researcher's dissertation to be defended to a committee at Ferris State University in the spring of 2013 and may be used in future published articles and professional presentations.

- The purpose of the study is to explore the question: What are the primary curricular elements of CLS100 that have contributed to new and experienced students to be retained by Grand Rapids Community College? Your impressions, opinions, beliefs and perceptions will guide research for a dissertation for Lillian K. Anderson.

- Results of the study can be made available by contacting the researcher:

  > Lilly Anderson
  > Grand Rapids Community College
  > 143 Bostwick NE
  > Grand Rapids, MI 49503
  > landerso@grcc.edu
  > 616-234-3649

- The sole purpose of the focus group is to solicit your opinions and perceptions of the necessary curriculum for first-year students to be success. Risks to you are negligible. The participant group for this study is the small group of individuals. Comments, quotes or points of view may be recognized and related to individual participants by readers who may be critical or offended which could have adverse consequences to working relationships. In an effort to protect my individual identity, my personal name will not be used but rather coded and referred to as "Participant – Alpha Letter."

- Your participation may help improve the quality of CLS100 at GRCC as well as inform institutional leaders and faculty as whether or not to mandate such a course for future first-year students.

- I am not receiving any compensation for my participation in this study.

- This research plan has undergone the scrutiny of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects - Ferris State University and Grand Rapids Community College. The researcher has received approval to proceed with this interview research. I have viewed the approval document. I may contact the IRB at either institution should I have concerns. The contact information is as follows:

Dr. Connie Meinholdt, Chair, IRB Research	Donna Kragt, Dean of Institutional
ACS-2072, Ferris State University	Grand Rapids Community College
Big Rapids, MI 49307	143 Bostwick NE
231- 591-2759	Grand Rapids, MI 49503
IRB@ferris.edu	616-234-4044

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Grand Rapids Community College. If you choose to participate, you may rescind the decision at any time.

<u>Continuing with the focus group interview implies informed and free consent to be a participant in the study:</u>

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____
Participant Printed Name

_____   _____
Research Signature   Date

_____
Researcher Printed Name

APPENDIX

E: STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How do you define student success?

2. Why did you take CLS100?

3. Did CLS100 help you be more prepared to be successful in college? How?

4. What aspect of the curriculum was most relevant to you staying at GRCC?

5. What would you add in the class?

6. What would you remove from the class?

7. What knowledge, skill, or ability did you gain through CLS100 that has contributed to your college success thus far?

8. Do you now have a major since taking CLS100?

9. Are you more dedicated to graduate than prior to taking CLS100?

10. What did you gain from the College Success Plan?

11. Have you revisited your College Success Plan since CLS100?

12. What could the college do through the CLS100 course to improve your chances of completing your college goals?

13. Should GRCC make CLS100 mandatory for all incoming students?

14. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?

APPENDIX

F: FACULTY FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Faculty Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Did you feel prepared to teach CLS100 after attending the orientation?

2. How do you feel about your teaching experience?

3. How effective was the textbook Focus on Community College Success?

4. In what ways was CLS100 curriculum effective for you?

5. In what ways does the CLS100 curriculum contribute toward student retention?

6. Did you have the students complete a college success plan?

7. Have you remained in contact with any of your CLS100 students as a mentor/advisor?

8. Did you use the exercise provided in each chapter? Did you use the FOCUS Challenge Cases at the beginning of each chapter? If no, why not?

9. How do you define student success?

10. What skills do you feel are necessary for students to be successful in college?

11. If you could change one thing in your curriculum, what would it be and why?

12. What was the most difficult section in the text for you to develop and facilitate? Why was it difficult?

13. Do you feel GRCC should make CLS100 mandatory or all incoming students?

14. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?

APPENDIX

G: FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Institutional Review Board (FSU - IRB)
Connie Meinholdt, Ph.D. - Chair
820 Campus Drive
Ferris State University
Big Rapids. MI 49307
(231) 591-2759
IRB@ferris.edu

To: Dr. John Cowles & Ms. Lilly Anderson
From: C. Meinholdt, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Applications #120902 (Title: The Effect of a First Year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College)
Date: October 12ᵗʰ, 2012

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "The Effect of a First Year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College" (#120902) and determined that it is *exempt – 1C* from full committee review. This exemption has an expiration date three years from the date of this letter. As such, you may collect data according to procedures in your application until October 12ᵗʰ, 2015. It is your obligation to inform the IRB of any changes in your research protocol that would substantially alter the methods and procedures reviewed and approved by the IRB in this application. Your application has been assigned a project number (#120902) which you may wish to refer to in future applications involving the same research procedure.

Finally, we wish to inform researchers that the IRB will require final reports for all research protocols approved as mandated by FR 45, Title 46 (Code of Federal Regulations) for using human subjects in research. The follow-up report form is available at: http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/hsrc/. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let me know if we can be of future assistance.

APPENDIX

H: GRCC IRB APPROVAL LETTER

September 12, 2012

Lilly Anderson
10305 Chinook Dr.
Allendale, MI 49401

Dear Ms. Anderson:

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: The Effect of a First Year Experience Course Curriculum on Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your request by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Grand Rapids Community College. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study. Your proposal has been classified as "Exempt."

You are responsible for immediately informing the Institutional Review Board of any changes to your protocol, or of any previously unforeseen risks to the research participants.

This approval is good from September 12, 2012 to September 12, 2013. If you wish to continue your research after this date, you must complete and submit an updated protocol

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Donna Kragt

Donna Kragt
Dean of Institutional Research & Planning
Chair of the IRB

Grand Rapids Community College

143 Bostwick Avenue, NE • Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503-3295 • ph: (616) 234-GRCC • grcc.edu

VISION • As a college of distinction, GRCC inspires students to meet the needs of the community and the world.
MISSION • GRCC is an open access college that prepares individuals to attain their goals and contribute to the community.

APPENDIX

I: CARP COLLEGE LEARNING STUDIES (CLS100)

OFFICIAL COURSE OUTLINE

[Course Description]	
Course Number	**CLS 100**
Course Title	**Introduction to College: New Student Experience**
Catalog Description	**This course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.**

[Curriculum]	
Student Learning Outcomes	**To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will** **1. Define the traits of successful college students.** **2. Identify and visit college services.** **3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.** **4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.** **5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.** **6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.** **7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.** **8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.** **9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.** **10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.**
Assessment of learning outcomes	**Objective Tests 20-40%** **Projects 20-40%** **Written Papers 10-20%** **Oral Presentations 10-30%**

Course Outline	**I. Setting the Stage for College Success**
	   a. Defining what it means to be a successful college student
	   b. Describing goals and skills for being a college student

	c. Identification and location of college services
	d. Implement strategies for changing behavior
	
	II. Achieving Academic Success
	  a. Discovering your learning style
	  b. Developing learning techniques suited for your learning style
	  c. Leveraging technology for college and lifelong learning
	  d. Construction of a college success plan
	
	III. Achieving Lifelong Success
	  a. Developing values
	  b. Developing skills in personal health, finance, and interpersonal communications
	  c. Diversity in our world
	  d. Engagement with others to affect personal and civic change
	  e. Construction of initial career plan

Instructional Strategies	20-50% Lectures 30-40% In class activities/Discussion/Group Work 10-40% Projects 0-10% Community Service/Service Learning
Prerequisites	Open to students who have earned less than 18 credits.
Co-requisite	N/A
Graduation Requirements	N/A
Student provided learning resources	Access to transportation if Community Service/Service Learning option is selected Textbook
Recommended Skills and/or Knowledge	N/A

[Technology Skills (GLO1)]	
1. Electronic Communication Skills (email)	Level 2:1, 5, 8, 9
2. Word Processing Skills	Level 2:1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9
3. Basic Computer Skills	Level 1:This skill is introduced at the beginning of the course under Setting the Stage for College Success. Students lacking basic skills will be referred to the appropriate lab for additional assistance.
4. World Wide Web/Internet Skills	Level 1:This skill is introduced at the beginning of the course under Setting the Stage for College Success. Students lacking basic skills will be referred to the appropriate lab for additional assistance.

[Communication Skills (GLO2)]	
1. Written	Level 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 Students will write self-reflection papers, reports on campus services, learning styles, diversity and a college success plan.
2. Speaking	Level 2:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 Students will present oral reports on a variety of topics in this class.

3. Reading	Level 3:4
4. Listening	Level 3:4

[Computation Skills (GLO3)]	
1. Computation skills with positive and negative integers, fractions, decimals, and percentages	Level 0:
2. Estimation and graphical interpretation skills.	Level 0:
3. Proportional reasoning skills.	Level 0:
4. Spatial reasoning skills.	Level 0:

[Critical Thinking & Problem Solving Skills (GLO4)]	
1. Problem Solving Skills Including Decision-Making Skills for Best Strategy	Level 3:4, 5, 6
2. Creative Skills	Level 2:3, 4
3. Explanation and Justification Skills	Level 2:4
4. Logic Skills	Level 2:3, 4, 7
5. Multiple Perspective-Taking Skills	Level 3:4, 6, 7, 10

[Information Management Skills (GLO5)]	
1. Ability to identify the research question, potential sources of information; ability to search, retrieve or information from a variety of sources (including human resources).	Level 3:2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 **Through lessons on research, library and appropriate Internet use, students will be required to generate sources of information and retrieve research on a variety of topics including college services, diversity, and career planning.**
2. Ability to physically process information appropriately, and to discern what information is relevant, multiple means of evaluation.	Level 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
3. Ability to paraphrase, synthesize, and organize information into an final product that conforms with effort and legal guidelines.	Level 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

[Interpersonal Skills (GLO6)]	
1. Group Interaction: Describe some of the challenges they will face working in a group or team because of their personality type/style.	Level 3:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 **Students will assess their personality style in this course and will be able to directly relate it to success and challenges faced in group work. For example, in this course students identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior. Part of this development is learning about their own as well as others beliefs in small groups.**

2. Group Interaction: Be able to explain the roles inherent in any group (e.g. recorder, facilitator, and reporter) and the function of each role.	**Level 2:3, 4, 5, 6, 7**
3. Group Interaction: Understand/demonstrate acceptable interpersonal skills in a setting (e.g. classroom, lab, workshop, office) appropriate for their discipline. (Skills include using the proper eye contact and body language, being an active listener	**Level 2:7**
4. Teamwork: Exhibit the ability to build consensus, manage conflict and communicate respect to other team members while accomplishing a team task.	**Level 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10**
[Personal Skills (GLO7)]	
1. Ethics and Values. Identifies and applies values to guide ethical decisions and actions.	**Level 3:1, 3, 6, 7, 10**
2. Time and Resource Management. Manages the use of time and other resources to complete tasks and achieve goals.	**Level 3:4**
3. Responsibility. Recognizes and practices responsibility to self and others for attitudes, decisions, and actions.	**Level 2:3, 5, 6, 7**
4. Lifelong Learning Skills. Adapts to new situations and demands by applying and developing knowledge and skills.	**Level 3:8, 9, 10**
[Diversity Skills(GLO8)]	
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the breadth of diversity (culture, race, disability, socioeconomic status, geographic origin, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion, and/or any other legally protected class).	**Level 3:1, 6**
2. Describe and analyze one's own cultural values, beliefs and biases, and the influence of diverse cultural perspectives on human thought and behavior.	**Level 3:1, 6, 10**
3. Recognize the consequences of societal exclusion, both past and present on the human experience.	**Level 3:6, 10**
4. Articulate the difference between and among these constructs; awareness of, sensitivity to, tolerance for, and respect for, those from different cultures and lifestyles.	**Level 3:6**
5. Recognize the impact of socioeconomic status on life opportunities.	**Level 3:6, 10**
[External Need]	
Transferability	**This course is similar to other First Year Experience courses at four-year and two-year colleges and may transfer as specific course credit or general credit.**

Accreditation	N/A
Community Need	N/A
Life-long Learning	
Target Population	This course is offered for new students at GRCC. This course is designed to help new students ease into the world of higher education.

[Course fit within existing programs]	
Course fit within existing programs	This course is designed to help all students succeed in higher education.

[Relation to Other Departments]	
Relation to other departments	While some of the content of this course is covered in PY100, CLS100 is designed for all new students, not just those in developmental education courses.

[Institutional Information]	
Special Staffing Requirements	CLS 100 instructors are required to complete the FYE Training Program. Open to all GRCC faculty and staff who hold a Master's degree or higher and have completed the FYE Training Program.
Resources needed to support course (Library, Technology...) Evaluate and document what resources are needed to effectively teach this course	Resources currently available at GRCC are sufficient to support this course.
Required Room Characteristics	A variety of room characteristics can support this course as long as multi-media is available.
Institutional assessment of course	Standard course evaluation methods can be employed to document traditional outcomes. Student success and retention outcomes can be measured by comparing to a matched group that did not complete CLS100. Students completing CLS100 should have a higher fall to fall retention rate and a higher cumulative GPA.

[Taxonomy Data]	
IS THIS A NEW COURSE?	No
Department	Counseling
School	School of Student Affairs
This course will first be offered in Semester Year	F08
Credits	2
Contact Hours	2

WKS 16	16
Lecture Hrs/WK	2
Lab/WK	0
Lecture / Lab / WK	
Clinic WK	
Enrollment Limit	25
Fees	0
Is this course equivalent to another course?	N/A
Does this course replace an existing course?	N/A
Is this course required in a state approved occupational program?	No
Is this course part of a non-occupational department but required in a state approved occupational program?	No
Is this course a developmental course?	No
Is this course open to Early College/Dual Enrolled (high school) students?	Yes
Is this course a co-op or seminar course?	No
ACS Code	
Author of New Course	John Cowles
Department Head/Program Director:	Fred Zomer
Date of ADC Approval	
V.P. Academic Affairs Approval	
Final Document Date	
	Digitally signed by: jcowles@grcc.edu

The Process | Latest Changes | Approvals | Coversheet | Transfer | Full Report | Login

APPENDIX

J: FACULTY SYLLABI

Grand Rapids Community College

CLS 100
Introduction to College:
New Student Experience

Instructor:
Phone:
Email:
Class Days/Time:
Office Location:
Office Hours:

COURSE TITLE

CLS 100 Introduction to College: New Student Experience

PREREQUISITES

This course is open to any student who has earned less than 18 credit hours and is not participating in Early College.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Introduction to College is a 2 credit hour course designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

REQUIRED TEXT/MATERIALS

1. *Focus on Community College Success* (2nd ed.). Staley, Constance. Wadsworth (2012) Cengage Learning.
2. 3 Ring Binder
3. A 12 month planner with daily and monthly viewing pages.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who participate in this course will gain an awareness and understanding of the importance of properly utilizing learning and behavior skills which have been proven to promote college and life success. This course will utilize lecture as well as small group experiences to explore, identify, and discuss behaviors, perceptions, and emotions that benefit or hinder the student's development of a lifestyle that optimizes their chances of academic and life success. At the end of this course it is expected that students will have acquired an understanding of the mind sets and behaviors necessary for the experiencing of a positive academic and life outcome.

MAJOR COURSES TOPICS
Adjusting to College
Learning and Test Taking Strategies
Time Management & Money Management
Critical Thinking & Decision Making
Building Healthy Relationships
Culture and Diversity

COURSE OUTCOMES

To demonstrate success in college and lifelong learning, students will:

1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES:

- **Students are expected to be participators and contributors to all class discussions and activities.**

- **All assignments must be handed in on the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted!**

- No Laptops are to be used during class period except when designated.

- Students are required to submit assignments in printed and/or electronic form as instructed.

- If a student is absent from class, it is the *student's* responsibility to obtain any missed information relating to assignments/quizzes/tests.

- Students are encouraged to give advice and interact with each other when the instructor is not lecturing/demonstrating. Each person, however, must develop his/her own solutions to the assignments. Students may not "work together" on graded assignments. "Working together" is defined as concurrently completing the assignment together, copying (by any means) another's work (or portions of it), or comparing completed assignments upon being graded.

MODES OF INSTRUCTION

Lecture and Power Point Presentations

Small Group and Class Discussions
Writing Assignments
Video Presentations

ATTENDANCE

Many assignments will be started and completed individually *during class time;* which makes attendance critical. In keeping with the policy of the GRCC Business Department, I will assume a student has dropped if s/he misses the equivalent of two (3) weeks of class: Since this class meets once per week, that would be missing 3 class periods.

COLLEGE POLICIES:

The academic policies and procedures of GRCC are outlined in the College Catalog at www.grcc.edu/catalog. Additional policies pertaining to academic honesty, classroom disruption, conduct and substance abuse, can be found in the GRCC Student Handbook at www.grcc.edu/handbook.

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Blackboard
This class uses Blackboard® (http://bb.grcc.edu). You will use Blackboard® to access assignments, announcement, quizzes, view grades, download and/or print class material.

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Help Desk
The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring
To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

Counseling & Career Services
The Counseling and Career Center provides personal counseling, career counseling, and academic advising to current GRCC students. Our goal is to empower students to succeed at GRCC and in life. For more information about the variety of services offered visit http://cms.grcc.edu/counseling.

Library & Learning Commons
The Library & Learning Commons (LLC) acquires resources integral to college learning. Building connections between learners and the information literacy skills they need is our highest priority. To learn more about the vast array of services available to students, visit http://cms.grcc.edu/library.

Computer Labs
Subject-specific labs offer software for that field. For example, the Biology Learning Center offers software for Anatomy and Physiology; the Math Lab offers Maple 10 and the English and Language Lab offers access to reading and foreign language software. You can visit http://cms.grcc.edu/academic-support-center/labs for specific locations and availability.

PRESENTATIONS

Diversity Presentation

Select a current diversity issue facing our world today with a group to be approved by the instructor. Write a 1 page summary of the problem. Explain a) why the issue is a problem; b) what you learned; c) your personal feelings about your experience; and d) indicate any change of mindset as a result of your experience. Group members each turn in their own 1 page summary and all members must participate in the presentation.

Personal Strategy for College Success Presentation

Present your success plan to achieve your dreams. You may use power point presentation software, interview overview, poster board, handouts, etc. List a) your short and long term goals; b) learning style; c) resources to accomplish your goals; and d) average salary of the profession.

**More detailed instructions for presentations will be provided on Blackboard.

ACADEMIC ADVISING APPOINTMENT

You are required to make an appointment with any academic advisor. You may do this by calling (616) 234-3900. More detailed instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

JOURNALS/ASSIGNMENTS

Journals/assignments will be assigned during each class period and will be due the following class period. After journals are graded they will be returned to students to be kept in their binders. Journal topics and activities will be announced in class and also posted on Blackboard.

EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES
There will be multiple chances to get extra credit in activities outside of class during this semester. These opportunities will be posted on Blackboard.

GRADING

Grades will be determined by the combination of the following assignments/presentations/tests/attendance:

Attendance and Participation (-25 pts. per Missed Class or Non-Participation)	150
Tests	300 (75 points per test)
Diversity Presentation	100
Journals/Assignments	300
Success Paper and Presentation	100
Career Counselor Visit	50
Total Points	**1000**

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grades will be calculated based on the percentage of points earned divided by total points possible. The grading scale for this course is as follows:

Grade	% Grade		Grade	% Grade
A	1000-930 points		C	760-730 points
A-	920-900 points		C-	720-700 points
B+	890-870 points		D+	690-670 points
B	860-830 points		D	660-630 points
B-	820-800 points		D-	620-600 points
C+	790-770 points		E	590-0 points

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Class Meetings	Topics	Journals/Assignments Due
	Introduction	
	Labor Day, No Class	
	Getting the Right Start	Chapter 1, Journal # 1 WM 1
	Building Dreams, Setting Goals Cultural Experience	Chapter 2, Journal # 2 WM 2
	Library Visit	Chapter 3, Journal # 3 WM 3
	Managing Your Time, Energy, and Money. Guest Speaker	Test 1, Chapters 1,2,3 WM 4
	VARK and Multiple Intelligence	Chapter 4, Journal #4 WM 5
	Critical Thinking Skills	Chapter 5, Journal #5 WM 6
	Technology, Research, and	Chapter 6, Journal #6

	Information Literacy Skills	WM 7
	Class Engagement, Note-taking, and Memory	Test 2, Chapters 4,5, 6 WM 8
	Work on Group Diversity Presentations Wes Moore Discussion	Chapter 7,8 Journal #7
	Studying and Test Taking Diversity Presentations	Chapter 9, Journal 8 Diversity Paper Due
	Guest Speaker. Diversity Diversity Presentations Continued	Test Chapter 7, 8, 9 Chapter 10, Journal 9
	Guest Speaker. How to Choose a Major and Career	Chapter 11, Journal 10 Advisor Paper Due
	College Success Presentations	Chapter 12, Journal 11 College Success Papers Due
	Test 4 Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13	Chapter 13, Journal 12

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

Name:
Office:
Voicemail:
E-mail:
Office Hours:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

CLS 100, Introduction to College: New Student Experience is open to students who have earned less than 18 credits. This 2 credit hour course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Books:

The Other Wes Moore
ISBN: 9780385528207
Author: Wes Moore
New: $15.00
Used: $11.25

FOCUS On Community College Success
ISBN: 9781285155043
Author: Constance Staley
New: $86.25
Used: $64.75

Supplies:
- A binder with dividers in which to keep handouts, journal entries, and assignments
- Lined paper **I strongly prefer that you NOT rip pages out of a spiral, but rather have unattached sheets of paper available
- Writing utensils, including highlighters

Please have available and bring to class when assigned
- **Two 2-pocket folders** to use for handing in finished writing projects (the plastic kind works best – please avoid oversized "trapper-keeper" style folders)
- Money on your **Raider Card** to pay for printing: **You will need to print!!
- A portable storage device (**flash drive**) upon which to save and transfer files

Outside of class plan to have access to a computer with word-processing and internet and printing capabilities (while you may not have one at home, you must have access to one, so plan to work on campus or at your local public library to complete your homework).

COURSE OUTCOMES

To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will:

1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

GRADING:

The categories of classwork will be weighted in the following way:
- Objective Tests 20%
- Projects 40%
- Written Papers 20%
- Oral Presentations 10%

Evaluation of assignments will be communicated in points. The semester will total about 1000 points. You can translate your points to a percentage any time by dividing your earned points by the number of points possible at that time. Final letter grades will be figured using the following scale:

A 93-100%	B+ 88-89%	C+ 78-79%	D+ 68-69%	E 0-59%
A- 90-92%	B 82-87%	C 72-77%	D 62-67%	(W if student drops by 10/14/12)
	B- 80-81%	C- 70-71%	D- 60-61%	(WP or WF upon student request)

You can withdraw from this class through the on-line student center through 10/14/12. After that date, you may request from me a WP or WF (based on the grades you have earned). If you simply quit coming to class without dropping it or requesting a WP/F grade from me, you will receive an E. If you run into trouble this semester, please don't just give up – schedule some time to talk with me or your counselor!

COURSE POLICIES:

1. "MAILBOX" FOLDERS: Record your attendance and submit any required hard copies of assignments and any written questions/requests/ reminders via your folder. I will distribute handouts, return evaluated assignments, answer requests, and check attendance via your folder. I keep possession of the manila folders and make them available at the beginning of each class session.

2. ATTENDANCE: Attendance is essential. Graded activities will occur at the beginnings (and middles and ends) of class sessions – those who are absent or come late or leave early will **not** be able to make up missed activities. Be sure to accurately record your attendance.

      Participating in class is as important as turning in your homework or taking the tests. Missing more than **4.5 hours** of class will result in a -20 point-per-hour penalty against your final grade (coming to class late or leaving class early will count toward your total absences). Expect the unexpected and save your absences for circumstances out of your control (such as weather or illness or cantankerous bosses). Perfect attendance will result in 20 points bonus.

      While there are no excused absences, life does happen. If you miss class, you are responsible for knowing what happened in class and for submitting any assignments due (assignments can be submitted via email or to the   ). Be sure to notify me via email (NOT phone) when you will be missing class, but please note: I will not "re-teach" a lesson in an email. I will attempt to post a summary each day, and all assignments as well as handouts and PowerPoints will be available online. Exchanging contact information with a "study-buddy" might be a good idea. (Remember, though, a summary or someone else's notes cannot substitute for the experience of being there; absences almost always negatively impact grades.)

      If class is suspended due to weather or my illness, please look on Blackboard for instructions.

3. PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: Representing someone else's words or thoughts as your own is both theft and deception. Be sure to accurately quote and credit your sources. Even if you change words, repeating the *ideas* of another requires citing the source. In an academic setting, using a paper, parts of a paper, or research done by you for another class is also considered plagiarism. Inadvertent plagiarism (source is cited but there is incomplete paraphrasing or mishandled punctuation) may result in having to redo the assignment for a reduced grade. Blatant plagiarism (no source referenced or cut-and-paste paragraphs or large portions of "lifted" material, whether exact words or simply ideas and structure) will result in a failing grade for the assignment. Repeated plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. For assignments which rely on source material, you must supply accurate bibliographical information and a photocopy of the source. Most written assignments are submitted through SafeAssignment, a plagiarism-checking function of Blackboard.

      Cheating, using or sharing (or attempting to obtain, use, or share) information for work you are expected to do alone, is dishonest; it also short-circuits your education. Cheating will be dealt with in the same manner as plagiarism. There will be opportunities for collaborative work, but when your work is supposed to be only yours, make sure it is. You may not re-take a test one which you have cheated. Fabrication (intentionally falsifying or inventing information or sources) is also considered cheating.

4. CLASS SESSIONS: Bring your binder and text book to every class. Pick up your mailbox folder when you enter class: mark your attendance, take any handouts, and leave any assignments or messages. Expect to participate in large group and small group discussions. Expect to use paper and writing utensils (including highlighters) to take notes and accomplish in-class writing. Expect to read, highlight, and refer to your text in class. Expect "field trips" to places on campus and nearby locations. Expect speakers in class.

You and your classmates have the right to a classroom conducive to learning; therefore, all of us must behave with respect toward others. Please refer to the academic policies and procedures of GRCC which are outlined in the College Catalog at www.grcc.edu/catalog. Additional policies pertaining to academic honesty, classroom disruption, conduct and substance abuse, can be found in the GRCC Student Handbook at www.grcc.edu/handbook.

The use of electronic devices which disrupt the learning process and teaching environment is disrespectful. Please switch phones to vibrate and refrain from texting, playing games, or listening to music during class. Wait until after class to respond to messages. While laptops and tablets can be beneficial to students, they can also be a distraction. If you bring one to class, please use it responsibly and respectfully (and leave social networking for outside of class).

5. BLACKBOARD, INTERNET, and E-MAIL: I support our twice weekly class sessions with Blackboard®. You will use Blackboard to access assignments, submit assignments, download or print course materials, communicate with me and your classmates, and check your grades. Information Technologies Service or the technicians in the computer labs can assist with computer related questions.
Make sure to regularly access your GRCC e-mail address (or set it to forward e-mail to the account you use frequently). **All communications from me will be sent to your GRCC e-mail** address. Please identify yourself in your e-mails by including your name in your message and by including the course number (**CLS100-**) in the subject line with an indication of the topic or purpose of your note.

Notes with uninformative subject lines may be ignored.

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic

adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Help Desk

The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring

To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE:

- Take responsibility for your learning – I can tell you what to read, but you have to read it with your mind engaged. I can tell you what to write, but you have to write with purpose. I can tell you were to go, but you have to go intending to benefit.
- Attend all classes **awake**(!), **alert**, and prepared.
- **Intend** to benefit from your assignments.
- Do your best to **understand** the book and class and to **apply** the information to your work.
- Carefully read all course documents and follow directions, submitting all assignments on time.
- Get help sooner than later. Keep in communication with me!
- Look to establish a camaraderie with your classmates.
- Regard me as your ally rather than your adversary☺

CLS 100 SYLLABUS

Purpose:

This course will assist each student with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, campus services, academic and career planning, civic engagement and diversity.

Materials Required:

Focus on Community College Success by Constance Stanley
The Other Wes More

Outline:

Week 1
Introduction
Chapter 1: Getting the Right Start

Week 2
Chapter 2: Building Dreams, Setting Goals

Week 3
Chapter 12: Choosing a College Major and Career

Week 4
Chapter 3: Learning about Learning
Chapter 4: Managing Your Time and Energy

Week 5
Chapter 5: Thinking Critically and Creatively
Chapter 6: Developing Technology, Research, and Information Literacy Skills

Week 6
Chapter 7: Engaging, Listening, and Note-taking in Class

Week 7
Chapter 8: Developing Your Memory

Week 8
Chapter 9: Reading & Studying

Week 9
Chapter 10: Taking Tests

Week 10
Chapter 11: Building Relationships
Chapter 13: Creating Your Future

Assignments:

Participation/Attendance:	60 points
Time Management	100 points
Counseling Appointment	70 points
Educational Development Plan	70 points
Career Counseling	100 points
Learning Style Project	100 points
Budget Activity	100 points
Scavenger Hunt/Video	100 points
Quizzes (4)	100 points
Success Plan	100 points
Multicultural Activity	100 points

_____
Total 1000 points

Grading:

A   930-1000
A-   900-929
B+   866-899
B   833-865
B-   800-829
C+   766-799
C   733-765
C-   700-732
D+   666-699
D   633-665
D-   600-632

Grand Rapids Community College

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

COURSE DESCRIPTION

CLS 100, Introduction to College: New Student Experience is open to students who have earned less than 18 credits. This 2 credit hour course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity. Given this broad, practical, and personal scope, I offer a lot of friendly advice, as a good uncle might do, so—call me Uncle (or whatever).

MATERIALS NEEDED

Constance, Staley. Focus on Community College Success. Colorado Springs: Wadsworth, 2012.
Moore, Wes. The Other Wes Moore. New York: Spiegel and Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

COURSE OUTCOMES
To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will:
1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

COURSE SCHEDULE and GRADING:

Assignments are due online by Saturday at 11:55p. For each assignment, we'll first cover the related chapter and then discuss the assignment directions. Many assignments have audio and/or written directions and samples on our Blackboard (Bb).

Week 1
CSFI Pre-test 2% (Graded for Completion). Course overview. Video on "How to become a Superstar Student"
Group Oral Presentation on 1.3 (pp17-19, IN class) 5% (Graded for Completion) (Directions given orally)
Week 2
Explain MP3 Audio and Critique 10% (Chapter 7) (2 pages, Directions are in Bb/Assignments)
Week 3
Ways teachers teach, examining pedagogy. View lectures and discuss how your learning style adapts.
Week 4
Chosen Project 10% (Chapter 2) (3 pages, Directions are in Bb/Assignments)
Week 5
Book Review 10% (Answer questions based on audio excerpts, 2 pages) The Other Wes Moore
Week 6
Logic Test 10% (Chapter 5) (Covering Formal and Informal Fallacies)
Week 7
Information Literacy, researching in the library and online, for your Group Project
Week 8
Group Project 10% (Chapters 6 & 9) (1 page each member, Graded for Completion; Using Discussion Board and Wiki; Group Peer-review required, Directions are in Bb/Assignments)
Week 9
Final Exam 15% (Over Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11) (Online, open-book and open–note)
Week 10
ASL Project 15% (Chapter 11) (3 pages, Directions are in Bb/Assignments)
CSFI Post-test 3% (Graded for Completion)
Class Participation 10% (See Rubric below)

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance:
Miss four classes with no deduction. For each class you miss after that, I deduct 1/3 of a letter from your final grade. I take attendance near the beginning of class; if you miss that, you're marked absent.

♦ I do not read rough drafts. Turn in your best work, after having it peer-edited, and after listening to the audio instructions and reading samples. The assignment instructions trump all samples. Some assignments are graded for mostly for completion (pass/fail); if the writing conventions (grammar, mechanics, style) are good, and you followed the assignment directions, and the level of rigor shows a good faith effort, the assignment passes.
♦ Explicitly follow the required assignment outlines, and don't submit previously submitted work, or receive a 0% for that assignment. I assume you've read and understand the Student Handbook's statement on plagiarism; I don't allow quotations in assignments, don't type verbatim or copy and paste another's work, if the information you're explaining comes from another source then cite it, and don't have anyone submit their work in your name.
♦ When emailing me, list your course number in the Subject heading. If your name has changed since being a student here, use both last names. Email is my preferred method of communication. If you use texting more than email, you can sign up on Blackboard (Bb) to

have my emails forwarded to your phone. *Email me only from your college email account, or the spam filter will stop it. I do reply to emails, so if you don't get a response within 24 hours, call me.*

- Missed exams or tests cannot be made up, aside from strong and validated reasons. Late papers and projects will not be accepted, generally. Any late assignments I might choose to accept will be graded down by one letter, for each day they are late.
- If I can't justify giving an assignment at least 60%, it receives 0%.
  - Assignments are due on Bb at 11:55p EST, of the assigned date.
  - *Written assignments must be submitted through Safe-Assignment, from Assignments. Don't mess with this plagiarism checker—it's powerful. Sometimes, they also are submitted to Discussion Board.*
    - If you have technical difficulties or don't own a computer, use the college computer lab, or your local library computer, or a coffee house wi-fi, or borrow a friend's computer, or call/email the tech help desk… *I won't excuse late papers for these reasons.*
- Cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used during class. Computers may be used only during group work and when I otherwise indicate. Your Class Participation grade, at least, will suffer if you do, at my discretion.
- Use the restroom before or after class, to avoid disrupting the class. Leaving and re-entering the room repeatedly can lower your class participation grade significantly, at my discretion; see me, if you have medical exceptions.
- If you'd like to discuss class methods, tools, structure, or style, meet with me in my office or after class, out of consideration to your classmates.
- Neighbors who have to be reminded repeatedly not to talk during class will be split up for the remainder of the semester and might have their participation grade lowered (at least).
- If you miss a class, ask your study partner what you missed. You are responsible for announced changes. Though our course has a lot of helpful information on Bb, this is not an online or hybrid course. (I often do, however, use the "flipped classroom" approach, utilizing class time for working the assignments more than for traditional lecturing. Some learn best in groups or on computer, they'll tend to appreciate lecturing less; others prefer lecturing over group work. You can't please all the people all the time.)
- If I get loud or impassioned, understand that it's for effect—especially for early morning classes!
- *Attachments must be only in **Rich Text Format (rtf) or txt or doc**. If you submit work in another format, that I'm not able to open, the assignment will receive an E.*
- I will review the Discussion Board periodically, but will interject only as necessary; for online assignments, you must be especially self-motivated and directed.
- This syllabus is subject to change.
- Expect assignments graded within about a week of the date handed in. If you wish to contest a grade, you must do so within two weeks of receiving the assignment back. Most often, locate your paper's comments in the online Grade Center. Some papers will be graded using my grading rubric, located next to your grade on Grade Center.
- Keep all assignments until after you receive your final course grade. Back up all your assignments, to a USB- or thumb-drive.

On-ground Participation

♦ Everyone begins class with a B, for participation. *Poorly* meeting these criteria lowers the grade; meeting them *especially well* raises it. Those who excel verbally, but not in writing skills, probably do better in participation than on writing assignments; and they won't receive added points to their writing assignments simply because writing is not their forte. The reverse also holds true.

♦ Feel free to ask relevant questions or to make relevant comments at any time during the class.

♦ For behavioral infractions, I will first give you a verbal warning, followed by two written warnings. If disruptive or disrespectful behavior persists, I'll either refer you to the Student Code of Conduct Office or fail you for conduct. You will have the right to appeal. For lesser infractions, I'll ask you to leave for the remainder of the class period; if you refuse to leave, you will be "flagged" for behavior on Early Alert and Campus Police will escort you out.

♦ Small groups will be arranged, occasionally, by geography, ideology, or by random selection.

Grading Schema:

1. *Quality and quantity* of questions and comments
2. *Attentiveness* (sleeping, daydreaming...)
3. *Deportment* (talking with neighbor, being disruptive, attempting to undermine student learning)

Four points are possible for each category. 12=A, 11=A-...

COLLEGE POLICIES:

The academic policies and procedures of GRCC are outlined in the College Catalog at www.grcc.edu/catalog. Additional policies pertaining to academic honesty, classroom disruption, conduct and substance abuse, can be found in the GRCC Student Handbook at www.grcc.edu/handbook.

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Blackboard
This class uses Blackboard® (http://bb.grcc.edu). You will use Blackboard® to access assignments, for announcement, to view grades, and to download or print class material.

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Help Desk

The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring

To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

OTHER INFORMATION

Helpful Links

- Student Tech Help Desk: http://www.grcc.edu/sthd can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts.
- Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.
- To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center (3rd Floor SCC) and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your instructor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs.
- Blackboard: http://bb.grcc.edu At the top of your course menu, click the Help icon and read the Bb manual, if needed.
- Counseling: www.grcc.edu/counselingevents 616-234-4130. Attend workshops on *Effective Note Taking, Study Skills and Learning Styles, Test Taking and Anxiety, Successful Transfer Planning, tips and Tools to Energize Your Semester, Exploring Business Careers, Exploring Health Careers, Staying Informed about Financial Aid, Final Exam Preparation…*
- Student Handbook: http://www.grcc.edu/catalog
- Disability Services: http://www.grcc.edu/disability
- Tutoring Center: http://www.grcc.edu/academicsupport
- GRCC Calendar: http://www.grcc.edu/calendar

Academic Policies

Excerpts from GRCC's Student Ethics Handbook draft

All students have the right to learn without interference from others. Faculty members have the authority to protect this right by creating and maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning. Towards this end GRCC has developed the following Code of Classroom Conduct. Students should be in class, in their seats, and ready to participate at the scheduled class start times. Acts of classroom misconduct will not be tolerated, and students guilty of such misconduct may be subject to classroom and institutional disciplinary actions.

What is classroom misconduct?

Classroom misconduct is any behavior that detracts from the learning experience. Students are required and expected to conduct themselves as mature, considerate adults. Students should conduct and express themselves in a way that is respectful to all persons. This includes respecting the rights of others to comment and participate fully in class.

Classroom misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1) Engaging in behavior that detracts from the learning experience. Behavior such as talking in class while the faculty member or other students are speaking, using offensive language, not paying attention, sleeping, reading unrelated materials, moving about the classroom, or engaging in other disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

2) Using cell phones, pagers, or other electronic devices that disrupt the learning process or teaching environment is not allowed. The use of personal laptop computers may be acceptable in some classes; however laptop computers must be used only for note taking or in direct support of the course objectives. Faculty members reserve the right to ask students to shut down any electronic devices.

3) Leaving the classroom prior to the end of class. If, under special circumstances, a student must leave early, the student should inform the faculty member at the start of class. Faculty members reserve the right to determine what constitutes a special circumstance.

Consequences of Classroom Misconduct

1. Giving a warning - an oral explanation by College official of violation and possible consequences if misconduct continues;
2. Dismiss from remaining class time during which the infraction occurs;
3. Assign a reduced or failing grade on assignment, paper, project or exam;
4. Lower the grade for the course;
5. Assign a grade of E, WP or WF for the course;
6. Required meeting with faculty member and/or college official if necessary
7. Referral for disciplinary action

Consequences of Academic Dishonesty

Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty may not only receive College sanctions, but possibly jeopardize future employment and educational opportunities. Graduate and professional degree programs and employers may request information from the College regarding a student's disciplinary record in an effort to investigate moral and ethical character.

GRCC holds to high ideals of academic and personal honesty and expects every student to do likewise. Dishonest acts like cheating, lying and plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student must always submit work that represents his or her original words or ideas. If any words or ideas are used that do not represent the student's original work or ideas, the student must cite all relevant sources in the proper format. The student should also make it clear the extent to which such sources were used. Words or ideas that require citation include, but are not limited to, all hard copy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and all verbal or visual communications

when the content of such communication clearly originates from an identifiable source. All submissions fall within the scope of words and ideas that require citations if used by someone other than the original author. Check with your instructor ahead of time if you have any questions regarding academic honesty. Academic dishonesty could involve but is not limited to:

1. Having a tutor or friend complete a portion of your assignments.
2. Copying work submitted by another student to a public class meeting.
3. Using information from on-line information services without proper citation.
4. Having someone assist you in answering examination questions or cases, having someone see/review/critique your answers prior to submitting those answers to the class, or obtaining or copying answers to an examination- from someone else.

At the discretion of the instructor, any student who engages in dishonest acts like cheating, lying and plagiarism may receive sanctions that range from a failing grade on the relevant assignment, up to and including, dismissal from the class and a failing grade. The Student Academic Grievance process can be used by students who feel they have been treated unfairly by this policy.

Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids.

If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need. *For information on the Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) student rights, responsibilities, Student Conduct Policy, and the GRCC Student Code of Conduct, please consult the GRCC Student Handbook, available in the Student Activities Office.*

Audit (V Grade)

Students may choose to receive a grade of "audit" for classes in which they enroll. Students may audit a class for enjoyment, for personal exploration, for gaining insight into a new subject, or for other reasons. Audit status does not count toward full-time enrollment. The course will appear on the student's transcript. Students pay full tuition for classes they audit and are expected to participate in all class activities. However, they are not compelled to take tests or examinations or to write term papers, but they may do so voluntarily.

Students must declare their audit status to their instructors during the first 25% of the class. Credit status may not be changed to audit status after this time limitation. Students may make arrangements on an individual basis with their instructors to change from audit to credit status. If they expect to do so, they must take all tests and examinations and write all assigned papers.

Withdrawal Process (W, WP, WF)

The "withdrawal" process is used to correct enrollment problems or because of unexpected or unusual events of catastrophic impact. Students must initiate all drops. A student may drop a class and receive a "W" until the date of 70% of class completion, as noted on the instructor's class roster. There is no penalty to the student receiving a "W" in the Grand Rapids Community College grading system.

The WP, WF or NS may be assigned by an instructor when they grade students, but Faculty may not award a "W" as a grade. The student may continue to attend, upon agreement with the instructor. There is no penalty to the student receiving a WP, WF or NS in the Grand Rapids Community College grading system. Students will not be able to initiate a drop during the final 30% of the class. The student will receive the grade they have earned (A, B, C, D, E, WP, WF, NS) based upon graded and missed work. Each hour of credit I, W, WP

CLS 100
Introduction to College: New Student Experience

Grand Rapids
Community
College

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

COURSE DESCRIPTION

CLS 100, Introduction to College: New Student Experience is open to students who have earned less than 18 credits and are not Early College. This 2 credit hour course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Staley, Constance. FOCUS on College Success. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.
- 2008-2009 Grand Rapids Community College Catalog (free in Career & Counseling Center)
- 2008-2009 Student Handbook Planner (free in Student Life)

COURSE OUTCOMES

To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will:
1. Define the traits of successful college students.
2. Identify and visit college services.
3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.
4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.
5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.
6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.
7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.
8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.
9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.
10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

GRADING

1000 Possible Points

- Attendance & Participation – 250 points
    - Class attendance & participation – 8 points per day, 28 days (224 possible points). There will be some form of class participation or in-class activity during each class, with the exception of exam days. Your attendance and participation will account for nearly a quarter of your entire grade. You must be in class, on time, and fully participate (engage in discussions, complete required assignments, check your grades and updates on Blackboard, etc.). On the days you are absent or excessively late you will get a class participation grade of 0 (zero) on that day. There are NO make-ups or late turn-ins for these points.
    - Course readings – all class activities and participation opportunities are based on you having read the assigned readings. If you do not complete your reading you will not be able to fully participate in class activities and may subsequently have your participation points reduced on that day.
    - Academic Advising Day – 26 points. All students are required to attend and participate in Academic Advising Day and Transfer Fair on Tuesday, October 21 in the Applied Technology Center. There are no day time classes this day and parking is free in the college ramps. You must sign in that day on the CLS 100 check list at the check in area of the event to get credit for these points.

- Writing Assignments – 380 points
    - College Success Factor Index (60 points) – Due September 10
    - CLS 100 Success Plan (60 points) – Due September 15
    - Online Orientation Scavenger Hunt (60 points) – Due September 22
    - Campus Scavenger Hunt (60 points) – Due September 29
    - College Event Reflection Paper (80 points) – Due November 5
    - Newspaper Article Presentation (60 points) – Due November 12

- Quizzes – 120 points, 3 quizzes at 40 points each. We will take 4 quizzes throughout the semester. They are unannounced and will cover the reading assigned for that day. Quizzes may be multiple choice, true-false, short answers, or a variety of formats. All quizzes will be taken outside of class on BlackBoard. Quizzes are open note, open book – but you may NOT use assistance from another person while taking your quiz. Also, quizzes are timed (this will be made clear at the start of each quiz). There are NO make up quizzes.

- Exams – 250 points, 2 hourly exams, 75 points each (150 points), and one final comprehensive exam (100 points).

Grading Scale
900-1000 points, A
800-899 points, B
700-799 points, C
600-699 points, D
599 points and below, E
COURSE POLICIES

1. Attend every class. You will learn best when you are physically and mentally present. I do not drop students for missing class. However, it will be impossible to pass if your attendance record is poor.
2. Be on time and be prepared. Be prepared to take notes, listen, share and learn.
3. Hand in all assignments at the beginning of class. No credit/points will be given for assignments that are handed in late UNLESS the student has made prior arrangements with me.
4. Treat each student, instructor and guest courteously and with respect.
5. Turn off all electronic devices including but not limited to, cell phones, beeping watches, pagers, mobile devices, portable music players, etc.
6. If you need a disability related accommodation for this class contact Disability Support Services at (616) 234-4140 or in person at room 368 in the Student Center
7. Do your own work. Anyone caught cheating/plagiarizing/stealing other student's work will receive and "E" for this course and will be reported to the Dean of Student Affairs for possible expulsion

COLLEGE POLICIES

The academic policies and procedures of GRCC are outlined in the College Catalog at www.grcc.edu/catalog.

Additional policies pertaining to academic honesty, classroom disruption, conduct and substance abuse, can be found in the GRCC Student Handbook at www.grcc.edu/handbook.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Blackboard
This class uses Blackboard® (http://bb.grcc.edu). You will use Blackboard® to access assignments, announcement, quizzes, view grades, download and/or print class material.

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Technology Help Desk
The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring

To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment Due
September 3	Course Overview	
September 8	Personal Vision & Goals	Chapter 1
September 10		College Success Factor Index
September 15	Learning to Learn	Chapter 2, Success Plan
September 17		
September 22	Knowing & Using Your Resources	Chapter 3, Online Orientation Scavenger Hunt
September 24		
September 29	Managing Time & Energy	Chapter 4, Campus Scavenger Hunt
October 1		
October 6	Thinking Critically & Creatively	Chapter 5
October 8		
October 13	Good Practices	Chapter 6
October 15		Test 1
October 20	Memory Skills	Chapter 7
October 21	**Academic Advising Day**	**Must attend and sign in to receive attendance points**
October 22	Memory Skills	
October 27	Reading & Studying	Chapter 8
October 29		
November 3	Taking Tests	Chapter 9
November 5		Campus Event Reflection Paper
November 10	Writing & Speaking	Chapter 10
November 12		Newspaper Article Presentation
November 17	Relationships & Diversity	Chapter 11
November 19		
November 24		Test 2
November 26	**NO CLASS**	**Thanksgiving Holiday**
December 1	Choosing a College Major & Career	Chapter 12
December 3		
December 8	Working Toward Wellness	Chapter 13
December 10		
December 15	Final Exam Week	Final Exam – refer to GRCC final exam schedule for exact date and time
December 17		

This syllabus and class schedule is tentative and can be changed at anytime by the instructor with advance notice to this class.

Grand Rapids Community College

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

COURSE DESCRIPTION

CLS 100, Introduction to College: New Student Experience is open to students who have earned less than 18 credit. This 2 credit hour course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Staley, Constance (2012). *Focus: On Community College Success.* 2nd Ed. Boston MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning
Moore, Wes (2011). *The other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates.*

COURSE OUTCOMES
To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will:
1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

COURSE POLICIES:

- **Attendance** is expected for this class because most of the graded work will be done (or started) in-class. You can have two absences. Any more than two will lower your grade in class one grade point. If you choose to withdraw from class, please pay attention to drop dates and financial aid penalties.

- **Punctuality** is also expected. If, for any reason, you should miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me promptly and obtain all pertinent class information. No make-up work will be available on points earned during class should you miss that session.

- **Academic Honesty:** Each student is expected to do his or her own original work. For questions regarding the University's stance on academic integrity, please refer to the GRCC website as it is the students' responsibility, as a member of the GRCC's learning community, to access and abide by the college's policies regarding academic conduct http://cms.grcc.edu/departments-navigation/service-departments/student-conduct-office/student-code-conduct/academic-hone .

- **Disability Services**: Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, mental, emotional) requiring accommodations should contact the Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140 for assistance.

- **E-mail**: E-mail is an essential element of this course. Please make sure you check your GRCC e-mail on a regular basis.

- **GRCC Blackboard**: GRCC Blackboard is an essential element of this course. Please make sure you check it on a regularly. Announcements will be posted here, grades maintained and any course materials loaded here.

- **Syllabi Changes**: The syllabi may be adjusted at any point in the course based on student feedback, input or material needing additional coverage in order to better serve the overall learning needs of the class.

- **Class Participation**: Learning happens when you are engaged with what is happening in the present. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices during class to eliminate distractions. College students are expected to engage in thoughtful discussions in class. You are expected read assigned materials before class and prepare such that you have a knowledge base to draw from to participate thoughtfully in classroom discussions. These points are not available for make up as the learning & participation will occur in the class and can't be recreated individually outside of the group setting.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There will be **three exams** worth 50 points each. The lowest exam will be dropped, leaving two exams contributing to your final grade. You will have **a paper** describing your campus involvement during the semester worth 100 pts. Participation projects will comprise of 50 pts and **participation** is **mandatory**. The reading of "The Other Wes Moore" will be discussed and content will be included in the exams.

CAMPUS LIFE PAPER REQUIREMENTS:

Each student will be required to attend three campus community events. Below is a list of the approved opportunities. Should there be an event a student would like to attend that is not on this list, they must get it

pre-approved. Students must attend the three events and write a paper (details below) on each one, the papers must be submitted electronically.   **Due by 10/23/12,** but can be submitted individually as they are completed. **Points: 100**

Reflection Paper Components:
1. List the name, date, and location (full address) of at least **three** events.
2. Discuss briefly the purpose of each event.
3. Describe main concepts the event facilitator(s) was trying to convey.
4. Describe what you learned about yourself and any insights you gained as a result of attending the event. In what ways did your perceptions change? Include impressions, feelings, and key observations.
5. Include at least one research citation supporting academic success and campus involvement
6. Describe how this event impacted EACH of the following skills:
   ➢ Communication Skills: Ability to effectively express and exchange ideas through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other modes of interpersonal expression.
   ➢ Critical Thinking Skills: Ability to gather and synthesize relevant information, evaluate alternatives, and implement creative and effective solutions.
   ➢ Social Responsibility Skills: Ability to practice community engagement that addresses environmental responsibility, social justice, and cultural diversity.
   ➢ Personal Responsibility Skills: Ability to become independent learners who understand and express the lifelong skills necessary for physical, social, economic, mental, and emotional health

Paper is to be three pages in length with 1 in margins, double spaced and 12 point font

CAMPUS LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

Options for Community Involvement are (must attend at least **3 different** options from below):

   ➢ General Workshops through Counseling & Career Services http://cms.grcc.edu/counseling-and-career-center/events/general-workshops

   ➢ Diversity Lecture Series http://cms.grcc.edu/lecture

   ➢ Teacher Education Seminars http://cms.grcc.edu/education-and-child-development/seminars

   ➢ Psychology Speaker Series http://cms.grcc.edu/psychologyspeakers

   ➢ Math Seminars http://cms.grcc.edu/mathematics/math-seminars

   ➢ Transfer Fair: http://cms.grcc.edu/transferfair

   ➢ Wes Moore Presentation October 17th 7p-8p.

GET THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR!

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request

accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Help Desk

The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring

To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

GRADING:

Grading System: This is a graded course. The grade in this course can affect eligibility for honors, athletics, financial aid, and probationary status. Grades in this class will be based on assignments as outlined in this syllabus. Grades at mid-term and for the semester will be based on "Points Earned/Points Possible".

POINTS	ASSIGNMENTS
50	Participation
100	Campus Involvement Project
200	Two Exams
350 Total Points	

95-100%	A
90-94.9%	A-
86-89.9%	B+
83-85.9%	B
80-82.9%	B-
76-79.9%	C+
73-75.9%	C
70-72.9%	C-
66-69.9%	D+
63-65.9%	D
60-62.9%	D-
Below 59.9%	F

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT ONE

AUG 28	INTRODUCTION	
AUG 30	GETTING THE RIGHT START	CH 1
SEPT 4	BUILDING DREAMS, SETTING GOALS	CH 2
SEPT 6	***COLLEGE CAMPUS TOUR***	
SEPT 11	CHOOSING A COLLEGE MAJOR AND CAREER	CH 12
SEPT 13	**EXAM UNIT ONE: (CH 1, 2, 12)**	
SEPT 18	Paul Phifer- Speaker for Career Exploration	

UNIT TWO

SEPT 20	LEARNING ABOUT LEARNING	CH 3
SEPT 25	THINKING CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY	CH 5
SEPT 27	ENGAGING, LISTENING, NOTE TAKING	CH 7
OCT 2	NOTE TAKING PART II	
OCT 4	READING AND STUDYING	CH 9

OCT 9   **EXAM UNIT TWO: (CH 3, 5, 7, 9)**

UNIT THREE

OCT 11	BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS	CH 11
OCT 16	TAKING TESTS	CH 10
OCT 18	*LIBRARY INSTRUCTION (Meet at Library)*	
OCT 23	CHOOSING A COLLEGE MAJOR AND CAREER	CH 12
	PAPER DUE	
OCT 25	MANAGING YOUR TIME AND ENERGY	CH 4
OCT 30	**EXAM UNIT THREE: (CH 4, 10, 11, 12)**	

Grand Rapids Community College

**CLS 100
Introduction to College:
New Student Experience**

Instructor:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Class Days/Time:	
Office Location:	Student Services Building
Office Hours:	Call (616) 234-3900 for an Appointment

COURSE TITLE

CLS 100 Introduction to College: New Student Experience

PREREQUISITES

This course is open to any student who has earned less than 18 credit hours and is not participating in Early College.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Introduction to College is a 2 credit hour course designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

REQUIRED TEXT/MATERIALS

1. *Focus on Community College Success*. Staley, Constance. (2009). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
2. The Other Wes Moore, One Name, Two Fates. Moore, Wes. (2011). Spiegel & Grau Trade
3. A 12 month planner with daily and monthly viewing pages.
4. Journal

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who participate in this course will gain an awareness and understanding of the importance of properly utilizing learning and behavior skills which have been proven to promote college and life success. This course will utilize lecture as well as small group experiences to explore, identify, and discuss behaviors, perceptions, and emotions that benefit or hinder the student's development of a lifestyle that optimizes their chances of academic and life success. At the end of this course it is

expected that students will have acquired an understanding of the mind sets and behaviors necessary for the experiencing of a positive academic and life outcome.

MAJOR COURSES TOPICS
Adjusting to College
Learning and Test Taking Strategies
Time Management & Money Management
Critical Thinking & Decision Making
Building Healthy Relationships
Culture and Diversity

COURSE OUTCOMES

To demonstrate success in college and lifelong learning, students will:

1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES:

1.) Students are expected to be participators and contributors to all class discussions and activities.

Students are encouraged to give advice and interact with each other when the instructor is not lecturing/demonstrating. Each person, however, must develop his/her own solutions to the assignments. Students may not "work together" on graded assignments. "Working together" is

defined as concurrently completing the assignment together, copying (by any means) another's work (or portions of it), or comparing completed assignments upon being graded.

2.) All assignments must be handed in on the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted!

3.) Please use safe assign to check all papers, please submit all papers electronically

4.) No Laptops are to be used during class period except when designated.

5.) Students are required to submit assignments in printed and/or electronic form as instructed.

6.) No Eating or Drinking within class

7.) No Cell Phones on within the course room.

8.) Check Blackboard

9.) If a student is absent from class, it is the *student's* responsibility to obtain any missed information relating to assignments/quizzes/tests.

MODES OF INSTRUCTION

Lecture and Power Point Presentations
Small Group and Class Discussions
Writing Assignments
Video Presentations
Guest Speakers

ATTENDANCE

Many assignments will be started and completed individually *during class time;* which makes attendance critical.

Punctuality is also expected. At GRCC, as in many places of employment, being absent or tardy communicates a lack of interest or dependability. Exceptions to this policy will be granted for extenuating circumstances only. (Work is not considered an extenuating and/or important reason to miss any class). If, for any reason, you should miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me promptly and obtain all pertinent class information. No make-up work will be available on points earned during class should you miss that session.

COLLEGE POLICIES:

The academic policies and procedures of GRCC are outlined in the College Catalog at www.grcc.edu/catalog. Additional policies pertaining to academic honesty, classroom disruption, conduct and substance abuse, can be found in the GRCC Student Handbook at www.grcc.edu/handbook.

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Blackboard
This specific course will utilize standard email procedures to distribute information related this course.

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Help Desk
The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring
To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

Late Work/ Redo's: As the assignments in the course are time sensitive and help enhance the learning experience, late assignments will not be only be accepted for up to 3 days for 50% credit. There is only one exam and short of an extraordinary reason, will not be allowed as a make-up.

Syllabi Changes: The syllabi may be adjusted at any point in the course based on student feedback, input or material needing additional coverage in order to better serve the overall learning needs of the class.

Class Participation: Learning happens when you are engaged with what is happening in the present. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices during class to eliminate distractions. College students are expected to engage in thoughtful discussions in class. You are expected read assigned materials before class and prepare such that you have a knowledge base to draw from to participate thoughtfully in classroom discussions. These points are not available for make up as the learning & participation will occur in the class and can't be recreated individually outside of the group setting.

PRESENTATIONS

Diversity Presentation

Select a current diversity issue facing our world today to be approved by the instructor. Write a 1 page summary of the problem. Explain a) why the issue is a problem; b) what you learned; c) your personal feelings about your experience; and d) indicate any change of mindset as a result of your experience.

Personal Strategy for College Success Presentation

Present your success plan to achieve your dreams. You may use power point presentation software, interview overview, poster board, handouts, etc. List a) your short and long term goals; b) learning style; c) resources to accomplish your goals; and d) average salary of the profession.

Final Paper

Write a 5 pages paper on a topic of your choice, as it relates to this course.
Topics: Need to be approved.
Paper should include: Title Page, page numbers, reference page (these pages are not included in the page number count).

GRADING

Grades will be determined by the combination of the following assignments/presentations/quizzes/attendance:

Attendance and Participation (-25 pts. per Missed Class or Non-Participation)	50
Quizzes	200
Presentation	150
Assignments / Journals	200
Success Paper and Presentation	100
Final Exam	250
Career Counselor Visit	50
Total Points	**1000**

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grades will be calculated based on the percentage of points earned divided by total points possible. The grading scale for this course is as follows:

Grade	% Grade	Grade	% Grade
A	1000-930 points	C	760-730 points
A-	920-900 points	C-	720-700 points
B+	890-870 points	D+	690-670 points
B	860-830 points	D	660-630 points
B-	820-800 points	D-	620-600 points
C+	790-770 points	E	590-0 points

Turn in journal upon entering the classroom; they will be turned back by the next day and available for pickup at Student Center (Counseling & Career Services office)/ or submit online to the blackboard course room

➢ **Assignments**: include the following items, in addition to guidelines for daily guide to the course.
➢

- **Campus Community Involvement:** Each student will be required to attend three campus community events. Below is a list of the approved opportunities. Should there be an event a student would like to attend that is not on this list, they must get it pre-approved. Students must attend the three events and write a paper (details below) on each one, the papers must be submitted electronically.

Community Involvement/ Pay It Forward (must attend at least **2 different** options from below):
  ➢ General Workshops through Counseling & Career Services
     http://cms.grcc.edu/counseling-and-career-center/events/general-workshops
  ➢ Diversity Lecture Series http://cms.grcc.edu/lecture
  ➢ Wes Moore comes to Cornerstone University – (dates to come)

Please write this reflection paper in essay format, approximately 1 page (single space – 12 point font).   Do not respond separately to each individual statement above. Develop a coherent, structured summary of your experience.

Reflection Paper Components:
1. List the name, date, and location (full address) of the event.
2. Discuss briefly the purpose of the event.
3. Describe (2) main concepts the event facilitator(s) was trying to convey.
4. Describe what you learned about yourself and any insights you gained as a result of attending the event. In what ways did your perceptions change? Include impressions, feelings, and key observations.
5. Describe how this event impacted "one" of the following skills:
   - Communication Skills: Ability to effectively express and exchange ideas through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other modes of interpersonal expression.
   - Critical Thinking Skills: Ability to gather and synthesize relevant information, evaluate alternatives, and implement creative and effective solutions.

- Social Responsibility Skills: Ability to practice community engagement that addresses environmental responsibility, social justice, and cultural diversity.
- Personal Responsibility Skills: Ability to become independent learners who understand and express the lifelong skills necessary for physical, social, economic, mental, and emotional health

- **Degree Plan:** Each student following their advising appointment, will generate a semester by semester plan outlining what classes they plan to take in order to complete their degree requirements (transfer, degree completion, MACRAO). This should be done in the Degree Works degree audit system in the planner section.

- **Class Participation:** Points are awarded on a weekly based on attendance and participation with the in class activities. There is no ability to make up missed points from this area.
- **Preparedness:** Points are awarded for arriving in class prepared on the dates in which "exercises" are due with them completed, assigned chapters read so that the student can actively participate with class activities and maximize learning. Assignments must be typed or clearly written and turned in at the beginning of class.
- **Career Presentation:** Each student will do a paper and presentation regarding their planned career directions answering & incorporating the questions below. **Due : Paper is due before student begins the presentation**

Please write this reflection paper in essay format, approximately 3 page (single space – 12 point font). Do not respond separately to each individual statement above. Develop a coherent, structured summary of your experience.

Career Paper/ Presentation Components:
1. What is the job that you are working towards? Or the career field?
2. To get that job, what type of education is required?
3. To get the job, what type of certification, licensure or exams must be passed?
4. Where can you typically find those jobs?
5. Why does this career path interest you?
6. What do you see as barriers for you regarding successfully entering this career path?
7. What are the positive and negative attributes of this career path?
- **Advising Meeting:** Each student must schedule an appointment with the honors advisor to talk about their career direction and graduation plans specific to the student. This meeting will give the student the tools to complete the degree plan.
- **Reflective Learning Journal:** Each student should complete a three paragraph reflective journal based on the weekly questions located on the weekly grid below. Journals must be submitted electronically by the start of the designed class period.

Journal Questions:
1. What are your college expectations? Academic, social, career,
2. What are your long term goals? What are your short term goals that will help you achieve your long term goals. What grades do you plan to earn this semester?
3. What is your career path and how did you come to this decision? If you aren't sure of a career path, what are you doing to help yourself determine a path?
4. What is the meaning of fiscal responsibility and why is it so important to start in college?

5. Talk about how technology has brought forth an evolution in education, do you feel it has been positive or negative?
6. Talk about why you think people say "listening is a lost art"? Why is listening so important in life?
7. What three items did you learn this week that you can apply towards your academic success?
8. Has your college experience met your expectations? Why or why not?
9. What type of testing do you excel in and which do you struggle with? Explain why you think this is given what you've learned about yourself.
10. What have you learned about your career path? Has your career path changed since beginning college?

- **Exam Review Activity:** The class will break into teams and we will use the Jeopardy game format for a review session. Bonus points will be awarded based on the team total point earning for the activity. Anywhere from 0-25 bonus points can be earned based on the team score.
- **Final Exam:** Traditional exam on the last day of class which will be multiple choice, true & false, matching and short answer. Student is responsible for all information covered through readings (outlines) and classroom information (lectures, discussions & presentations).

CLS 100 JOURNAL/ Assignments in Class- CHECKLIST (FALL 2012)

1. Online Self-Assessment *http://www.grcc.edu/?PageID=12804* ___/50
2. Dream Statement ___/10
3. Goals Sheet ___/10
4. Motivation Evaluation (p. 33) ___/10 (in class)
5. Motivational Pictures ___/10
6. Multiple Intelligence Inventory (p. 59-61) ___/10
7. V.A.R.K. Learning Style Assessment (Exercise 2.1 p. 66-68) ___/10 (in class)
8. Mind Map Exercise ___/10
9. Cornell Note-Taking Exercise ___/10 (in class)
10. Campus Resources ___/15
11. Learning Strategy Blueprint ___/25 (in class)
12. Reason Map ___/20
13. Time Management Plan ___/10
14. Financial Plan/Money Budget ___/10
15. People & Space Management ___/10
16. Relationship Workshop ___/10
17. Emotional Intelligence Exercise ___/10 (in class)
18. Strengths & Weaknesses Inventory ___/10 (in class)

19. Career Exploration Exercise ___/10 (in class)

20. Critical Thinking Exercise ___/15 (in class)

21. Problem Solving Exercise ___/15 (in class)

22. Quiz #1 ___/25

23. Quiz #2 ___/25

24. Quiz #3 ___/25

25. Quiz #4 ___/25

26. Quiz #5 ____/25

27. Quiz # 6 ___/25

28. Quiz #7___/25

29. Quiz # 8___/25

30. Diversity Paper and Presentation Assignment ___/50

31. College Success Paper and Presentation___/100

32. Career Counselor Visit ___/50

33. Journal Appearance & Content ___/50

34. Exit Assessment ___

35. Final Exam ___/250

36. Attendance *(-25 Points per Absence)* ___/0

* Total Points ____/1000

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CLS100 Introduction to College Fall 2012
<u>**SYLLABUS**</u>

COURSE PURPOSE: This course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Specifically, to promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will: define the traits of successful college students, identify and visit college services, identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior, develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking, describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them , examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context , develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications, use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards, construct a college success plan and initial career plan, and engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

COURSE SUPPLIES: For this class, you will need the following books and materials:

1. Textbook. Staley, Constance. <u>FOCUS on Community College Success</u>. Wadsworth Cengage Learning: 1st Edition.

2. Supplemental book. Brown, Wes. *The Other Wes Brown.* Spiegel & Grau, 2010

3. Planner. If you purchased your textbook through the college bookstore, a planner should have been included in your purchase. If you purchased the textbook elsewhere, you should purchase a planner to use over the semester. The bookstore has them, as do most big box stores, office supply stores, and bookstores. Purchase one with ample space for writing and at least 2 pages a week formatting.

4. Access and knowledge of your Blackboard email address and how to access Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The information in this course will be presented through discussions, individual and group classroom activities, assigned readings, and lots more class discussion. You will also be responsible for completing projects that incorporate information learned in this course with your own life.

COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE: We will be maintaining a Blackboard (Bb) site for this course. On this site you will be able to access important information related to this course. Make sure you have and use your GRCC blackboard email address. Learn to access our course and Blackboard online. Visit http://bb.grcc.edu and enter your username and password. For information visit Student Help Desk in Room 215 of ATC Bldg or call 234-3123.

COURSE POLICIES:
- **Attendance** is expected for this class because most of the graded work will be done (or started) in class.
- **Punctuality** is also expected. Class will begin on time. After five (5) minutes past the beginning of class, you will be considered absent. At GRCC, as in many places of employment, being absent or tardy communicates a lack of interest or dependability. Exceptions to this policy will be granted for extenuating circumstances only. If, for any reason, you should miss a class or will be considerably late, it is your responsibility to notify me promptly and obtain all pertinent class information and assignments. No make-up work will be available on points earned during class should you miss that session.

- **Academic Honesty:** Each student is expected to do his or her own original work. For questions regarding the University's stance on academic integrity, please refer to the GRCC website as it is the students' responsibility, as a member of the GRCC's learning community, to access and abide by the college's policies regarding academic conduct http://cms.grcc.edu/departments-navigation/service-departments/student-conduct-office/student-code-conduct/academic-hone .
- **Disability Services:** Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, mental, emotional) requiring accommodations should contact the Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140 for assistance.
- **E-mail:** E-mail is an essential element of this course. Please make sure you check your GRCC e-mail on a regular basis.
- **GRCC Blackboard:** GRCC Blackboard is an essential element of this course. Please make sure you check it on a regularly. Announcements will be posted here, grades maintained and any course materials loaded here.
- **Late Work/ Redo's:** As the assignments in the course are time sensitive and help enhance the learning experience, late assignments will only be accepted prior to the next class period but for 50% or half credit. Final project/paper will not be accepted late. There is no makeup on quizzes or exams.
- **Syllabi Changes:** The syllabi may be adjusted at any point in the course based on student feedback, input or material needing additional coverage in order to better serve the overall learning needs of the class.
- **Class Participation:** Learning happens when you are engaged with what is happening in the present. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices during class to eliminate distractions. College students are expected to engage in thoughtful discussions in class. You are expected read assigned materials before class and prepare such that you have a knowledge base to draw from to participate thoughtfully in classroom discussions. These points are not available for make up as the learning & participation will occur in the class and can't be recreated individually outside of the group setting.

Learning Resources:
- Blackboard: This class uses Blackboard® (http://bb.grcc.edu). You will use Blackboard® to access assignments, announcements, view grades, download and/or print class material.
- Support Services: Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.
- Counseling & Career Services: The Counseling and Career Center provides personal counseling, career counseling, and academic advising to current GRCC students. Our goal is to empower students to succeed at GRCC and in life. There are no costs for most services including counseling. For more information about the variety of services offered visit http://cms.grcc.edu/counseling .
- Library & Learning Commons: The Library & Learning Commons (LLC) acquires resources integral to college learning. Building connections between learners and the information literacy skills they need is our highest priority. To learn more about the vast array of services available to students, visit http://cms.grcc.edu/library .
- Technology Help Desk: The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.
- Tutoring: To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring to learn more.
- Computer Labs: Subject-specific labs offer software for that field. For example, the Biology Learning Center offers software for Anatomy and Physiology; the Math Lab offers Maple 10 and the English and Language Lab offers access to reading and foreign language software. You can visit http://cms.grcc.edu/academic-support-center/labs for specific locations and availability.

COURSE EVALUATION MEASURES:

1. Assessments of learning : Mid term exam (subjective - *take home* worth 50 pts)
   Final exam (objective/subjective – *in class*, worth 100 pts)
2. Discussion Board on Blackboard – up to 10 points each week = 120
3. Team presentation – up to 50 points
4. Career paper/project – up to50 points
5. Community Involvement – up to50 points
6. Class participation, assignments, and preparedness – 10 points each week = 120 points
7. Service learning – to be discussed

Grading points: A = 486-540   B = 432-485   C = 378-431   D = 324-377   E = below 323

There will be an opportunity for bonus points over the semester. Stay tuned!

<u>**CLASS SCHEDULE:**</u>

Before class each week, you need to read the assigned chapter in the text, completing the Readiness Check, at the beginning of the chapter, and the Reality Check, at the end of the chapter. Keep track of your responses in your composition book, along with your completed assignments.

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT READING	MOORE READING	ASSIGNMENT	COMPLETED
9/4/12	Introductions		Xi – Xiv; 3-45		
9/11/12	The Right Start	Chap 1	p.46-84	Ex 1.3, p 19	
9/18/12	Personal Management	Chap 4	p.85-122	Ex 4.2, p83;4.7, p97	
9/25/12	Learning	Chap 3	128-171	Ex 3.2,p57-562	
10/2/12	Dreams and Goals	Chap 2	173-186; 243-248	Ex 2.2 p32; 2.6 p41	
10/9/12	Thinking critically/creatively	Chap 5		Ex 5.2, p115-116	
10/16/12	Relationships and diversity	Chap 11		Ex 11.1,p 268-269; 11.7, p288	
10/23/12	Technology, research literacy	Chap 6		Ex 6.1, p136-137; 6.3, p147	
10/30/12	Presentations – Groups A & B				
11/6/12	Presentations – Groups C & D				
11/13/12	Choosing major & career	Chap 12		Ex 12.1,p306; 12.2, p313	
11/20/12	No class – Thanksgiving Holiday				
11/27/12	Creating your future	Chap 13		Ex 13.2,p324; 13.4, p332	
12/4/12	Catchup and Review				
12/11/12	Final Exam			Relax……..	

Grand Rapids Community College

Instructor:
Phone:
Email:
Office Hours: By Appointment Monday - Thursday

COURSE DESCRIPTION

CLS 100, Introduction to College: New Student Experience is open to students who have earned less than 18 credits and are not Early College. This 2 credit hour course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Focus on College Success, Constance Staley, Wadsworth Cengage Learning Publisher, 2nd Edition.
- College Success Factors Index (CSFI) access key.
- i-Clicker2
- Book: The Other Wes Moore
- Student Planner

COURSE OUTCOMES

To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will:
1. Define the traits of successful college students.

2. Identify and visit college services.

3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.

4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.

5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.

6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.

7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.

8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.

10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

COURSE POLICIES:

- **All assignments must be handed in on the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted! Unless accompanied with a NQA Coupon.**

- Blackboard will be used extensively to communication expectations, assignments, or announcements. It is the student's responsibility to stay informed via Blackboard.

- Students are required to submit assignments in printed and/or electronic form as instructed.

- If a student is absent from class, it is the student's responsibility to obtain any missed information relating to assignments/quizzes/tests. This information will be posted via Blackboard.

- **NQA Coupon:**
  Everyone deserves a second chance, so here is yours. You may use a No Questions Asked (NQA Coupon) if you are unable to turn in a homework assignment on the day it is due. That assignment will be accepted at the beginning of the very next class period if you attach this coupon. Please fill in your name and the assignment the coupon is being used for.

  Coupons attached to homework that is more than 1 class period late will be declared void, and will not count. Any homework turned in after the due date without a coupon attached will earn a zero. Remember there are many ways to get the homework to me on time, even if you don't make it to class. Coupons will not be accepted for anything other than homework assignments. No quizzes, no team assignments, no assignments that are part of your Final Exam work. Hold on to this coupon because it is the only one you will get. It will not be replaced if you lose it.

- **i-Clicker2:**
  We will be using i-clickers as an integral part of this class. You are responsible for having your i-clicker with you every time our class meets. If you cannot participate in an activity during class because you forgot to bring your i-clicker you will not receive credit for that activity. You will not be allowed to makeup what you have missed. The NQA Coupon cannot be used for a missed i-clicker assignment or activity.

CLASSROOM DECORUM

As a member of the Grand Rapids Community College community, you are expected to treat faculty, staff and other students with respect. You are expected to be engaged in the class discussions. It is disrespectful for you to work on your laptop computer, listen to headphones, talk on a cell phone, text message, eat, drink, sleep, read a newspaper or book, or to work on job or another course projects during scheduled class time. A violation of any of these rules will result in the same penalty as that for cell phones below.

There are NO cell phones permitted to be out and/or in my (or your) sight in this class. This class requires your engagement, and cell phones serve to detract from that engagement. Additionally, your phone should be not only put away, but on "silent" (NOTE: vibrate is NOT silent). If your phone is out and/or in sight, you will be asked to put it away, the first time will be a pass. I hope asking one time will be enough however any further requests or "sightings" will cost you 5 points each time I see you texting or using your cell phone. After the third offense the next request will be to leave class along with a loss of 10 points.

No food in class. You may drink soda, water, small snack, etc. all cans or bottles that may make noise should be opened PRIOR to class beginning so as not to disturb the class. Violations/abuse of this rule may result in you being asked to leave the class with a loss of 10 points.

This class will engage in open discussion – all students are to address one another and the instructor with respect and courtesy, this includes speaking when recognized by the professor. The proper way to be recognized is to raise your hand and wait until you are called on. This is not Parliament – you never "have the floor." I will let you know when you have been recognized and when your turn to speak is complete.

If you disagree with a point or classmate, you may express your disagreement but you may not attack the person expressing the opinions you are expected to express yourself in a principled and dignified fashion

Any name-calling (e.g., fascist, socialist, ignorant, etc.) during debate will result in your immediate dismissal from class. Name calling is an indication of a lack of ideas and civility – and will not be tolerated in this forum.

Any disrespectful or disruptive behavior – including, but not limited to: sleeping, reading, side discussions, overt disruptions, harassing behaviors, etc - will result in your dismissal from the class, and may result in your dismissal from the course with a "WF" (Withdraw Failing), and/or a referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Some assignments will be started/completed individually *during class time;* which makes attendance critical. The **70% date to drop this class is 11/01/2012. Please note "Attend"** is defined as being present in the physical classroom during the entire scheduled time. Everyone starts out with all total participation points. If you come late, leave early or are absent from class you cannot receive the total participation points.

COLLEGE POLICIES:

The academic policies and procedures of GRCC are outlined in the College Catalog at www.grcc.edu/catalog. Additional policies pertaining to academic honesty, classroom disruption, conduct and substance abuse, can be found in the GRCC Student Handbook at www.grcc.edu/handbook.

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Blackboard
This class uses Blackboard® (http://bb.grcc.edu). You will use Blackboard® to access assignments, announcement, view grades, download or print class material.

Support Services
Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.

Help Desk

The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.

Tutoring
To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring.

GRADING

Grades will be determined by the combination of the following assignments/presentations/quizzes/attendance:

Attendance	15%
Quizzes	23%
Presentations	25%
Assignments	37%

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grades will be calculated based on the percentage of points earned divided by total points possible. The grading scale is as follows:

Grade	% Grade	Grade	% Grade
A	100-93%	C	76-73%
A-	92-90%	C-	72-70%
B+	89-87%	D+	69-67%
B	86-83%	D	66-63%
B-	82-80%	D-	62-60%
C+	79-77%	E	59-0%

Grand Rapids Community College
CLS 100
Syllabus -

Section:	CLS 100 Introduction to College: New Student Experience
Day:	
Time:	Monday & Wednesday
Location:	
Credits:	2
Instructor:	
Office Hours:	
Office Location:	
Office Phone:	
E-mail:	

Required Materials: GRCC E-mail Account/ Blackboard Account
Planner
Book: Focus on Community College Success by Staley
Book: The Other Wes Moore

Goals: CLS 100 is a two credit college course that prepares you to be successful in college and in life. This class is known as a "First-Year Experience" (FYE) course. Most colleges and universities have FYE courses and this course may transfer to your next college. CLS 100 is designed to assist you with the knowledge, skills and abilities you need to be successful in college and life. Students who complete CLS 100 are more likely to continue in college to reach their goals. Research at GRCC has shown that students completing CLS 100 are much more likely to return for their second year than new students who did not take the course. College is an important investment in your future. **CLS 100 will help you to construct your personal roadmap to college success. College success leads to life success!**

Catalog Description: This course is designed to assist new students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and life. Topics will include learning styles, critical thinking, information management skills, GRCC history and services, study skills, values exploration, academic planning, career planning, civic engagement, and diversity.

Course Objectives: To promote success in college and lifelong learning, students will:

1. Define the traits of successful college students.
2. Identify and visit college services.
3. Identify beliefs, attitudes, and habits that may inhibit their success and implement strategies for changing behavior.
4. Develop effective learning techniques: note-taking, textbook reading, test-taking, memory building, writing, time management and critical thinking.
5. Describe their own learning style and select the approaches that will make learning easier for them.
6. Examine the advantages and challenges of diversity within a college context.
7. Develop effective strategies for college and life success in the areas of health, finance and interpersonal communications.
8. Use technology in college and lifelong learning to include Internet, e-mail, word

processing, and discussion boards.

9. Construct a college success plan and initial career plan.
10. Engage in the campus and larger community through activities which affect positive personal and civic change.

Grading System: This is a graded course. The grade in this course can affect eligibility for honors, athletics, financial aid, and probationary status. Grades in this class will be based on assignments as outlined in this syllabus. Grades at mid-term and for the semester will be based on "Points Earned/Points Possible".

95-100%	A
90-94.9%	A-
86-89.9%	B+
83-85.9%	B
80-82.9%	B-
76-79.9%	C+
73-75.9%	C
70-72.9%	C-
66-69.9%	D+
63-65.9%	D
60-62.9%	D-
Below 59.9%	F

Assignments:

- **Campus Community Involvement:** Each student will be required to attend three campus community events. Below is a list of the approved opportunities. Should there be an event a student would like to attend that is not on this list, they must get it pre-approved. Students must attend the three events and write a paper (details below) on each one, the papers must be submitted electronically. **Due by 10/24/12,** but can be submitted individually as they are completed. **Points: 10 points each, total 30 points.**

    Options for Community Involvement are (must attend at least **2 different** options from below):
    - ➢ General Workshops through Counseling & Career Services http://cms.grcc.edu/counseling-and-career-center/events/general-workshops
    - ➢ Diversity Lecture Series http://cms.grcc.edu/lecture
    - ➢ Teacher Education Seminars http://cms.grcc.edu/education-and-child-development/seminars
    - ➢ Psychology Speaker Series   http://cms.grcc.edu/psychologyspeakers
    - ➢ Math Seminars   http://cms.grcc.edu/mathematics/math-seminars
    - ➢ Transfer Fair: http://cms.grcc.edu/transferfair
    - ➢ Wes Moore Presentation: 10/17/12 7:00-8:00 pm

    Please write this reflection paper in essay format, approximately 1 page (single space – 12 point font). Do not respond separately to each individual statement below. Develop a coherent, structured summary of your experience.

    Reflection Paper Components:
    1. List the name, date, and location (full address) of the event.

2. Discuss briefly the purpose of the event.

3. Describe (2) main concepts the event facilitator(s) was trying to convey.

4. Describe what you learned about yourself and any insights you gained as a result of attending the event. In what ways did your perceptions change? Include impressions, feelings, and key observations.

5. Describe how this event impacted "one" of the following skills:

- Communication Skills: Ability to effectively express and exchange ideas through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other modes of interpersonal expression.
- Critical Thinking Skills: Ability to gather and synthesize relevant information, evaluate alternatives, and implement creative and effective solutions.
- Social Responsibility Skills: Ability to practice community engagement that addresses environmental responsibility, social justice, and cultural diversity.
- Personal Responsibility Skills: Ability to become independent learners who understand and express the lifelong skills necessary for physical, social, economic, mental, and emotional health

- **Chapter Outlines:** Students will write out a review of one of the chapters for class. Each review will then be loaded on our class site in Blackboard for use to review and study the material. Each review should be typed and submitted electronically and should capture the important content of the chapter. **Due: Each chapter is due the day it is presented in class. Points: 20 points**
- **Degree Plan:** Each student following their advising meeting, will generate a semester by semester plan outlining what classes they plan to take in order to complete their degree requirements (transfer, degree completion, MACRAO). This should be done in MyDegreePath degree audit system in the planner section. **Due: 10/31/12 Points: 40 points**
- **Class Participation:** Points are awarded on a weekly based on attendance and participation with the in class activities. There is no ability to make up missed points from this area. **Points: 10 points per class, 170 points total.**
- **Preparedness:** Points are awarded for arriving in class prepared on the dates in which "exercises" are due with them completed, assigned chapters read so that the student can actively participate with class activities and maximize learning. Assignments must be typed or clearly written and turned in at the beginning of class. **Points: 10 points each, 140 total.**
- **Career Presentation:** Each student will do a paper and presentation regarding their planned career directions answering & incorporating the questions below. **Due: Paper is due before student begins the presentation, presentations will be 10/24/12 or 10/29/12. Points: 25 points for the paper, 25 points for the presentation, total 50 points.**

Please write this reflection paper in essay format, approximately 3 pages (single space – 12 font). Do not respond separately to each individual statement above. Develop a coherent, structured summary of your experience. Students should complete at least one career assessment and incorporate this information into the assignment. Career Assessments can be found at http://cms.grcc.edu/career-development-services/career-assessments. The presentation should be 5-7 minutes in length.

Career Paper/ Presentation Components:
1. How did you decide upon this career path?
2. What is the job that you are working towards? Or the career field?
3. To get that job, what type of education is required?
4. To get the job, what type of certification, licensure or exams must be passed?
5. Where can you typically find those jobs?
6. Why does this career path interest you?
7. What do you see as barriers for you regarding successfully entering this career path?

8. What are the positive and negative attributes of this career path?
9. What schools have your major? What are the features and benefits of each school?

- **Advising Meeting:** Each student must schedule an appointment with the honors advisor to talk about their career direction and graduation plans specific to the student. This meeting will give the student the tools to complete the degree plan. Students should come prepared to the meeting. **Due: Advisor meetings should be done between 10/10-10/25** (please schedule early). **Points: 30 points**
- **Reflective Learning Journal:** Each student should complete a three paragraph reflective journal based on the weekly questions located on the weekly grid below. Journals must be submitted electronically by the start of the designed class period. **Due: weekly   Points: 10 points each for a total 100 points.**
  Journal Questions:
  1. What are your college expectations? Academic, social, career,
  2. What are your long term goals? What are your short term goals that will help you achieve your long term goals. What grades do you plan to earn this semester?
  3. What is your career path and how did you come to this decision? If you aren't sure of a career path, what are you doing to help yourself determine a path?
  4. What is the meaning of fiscal responsibility and why is it so important to start in college?
  5. Talk about how technology has brought forth an evolution in education, do you feel it has been positive or negative?
  6. Talk about why you think people say "listening is a lost art"? Why is listening so important in life?
  7. What three items did you learn this week that you can apply towards your academic success?
  8. Has your college experience met your expectations? Why or why not?
  9. What type of testing do you excel in and which do you struggle with? Explain why you think this is given what you've learned about yourself.
  10. What have you learned about your career path? Has your career path changed since beginning college?

- **Exam Review Activity:** The class will break into teams and we will have an activity for a review session. Bonus points will be awarded based on the team total point earning for the activity. Anywhere from 0-25 bonus points can be earned based on the team score.
- **Final Exam:** Traditional exam on the last day of class which will be multiple choice, true & false, matching and short answer. Student is responsible for all information covered through readings (outlines) and classroom information (lectures, discussions & presentations). **Points: 100 points**
- **Community Service/ Service Learning:** Each student will participate as a Paired Reading Mentor through the Schools of Hope program. This involves each of us to attend a training, get paired up with a student and mentor for 30 min a week, writing a reflective paper about the experience and completing a feedback survey. Please review the Service Learning sheet for specifics of this experience. If you are already involved in a community service/ service learning opportunity, please plan to meet so we can discuss if that can be used to meet this requirement.

Points:	5 points for registration	Due: 9/10/12
	15 points for attending a training	Due: 9/26/12
	65 points for mentoring for 7 weeks	Due: 11/1/12
	40 points for your reflective paper	Due: 11/1/12
	5 points for completing feedback survey	Due: 11/4/12

Total Points Available:

Campus Community Involvement (3)	30 points
Chapter Outlines	20 points
Degree Plan	40 points
Participation- in class	170 points
Preparedness	140 points
Career Presentation	50 points
Advising Meeting	30 points
Reflective Learning Journal	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Community Service/ Service Learning	130 points
TOTAL	**810 points**

Bonus Points: Exam Review Activity   Max 25 points

Course Policies:

- **Attendance** is expected for this class because much of the graded work will be done (or started) in-class. Work done in class for points can't be made up if missed.
- **Punctuality** is also expected. At GRCC, as in many places of employment, being absent or tardy communicates a lack of interest or dependability. Exceptions to this policy will be granted for extenuating circumstances only. (Work is not considered an extenuating and/or important reason to miss any class). If, for any reason, you should miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me promptly and obtain all pertinent class information. No make-up work will be available on points earned during class should you miss that session.
- **Academic Honesty:** Each student is expected to do his or her own original work. For questions regarding the University's stance on academic integrity, please refer to the GRCC website as it is the students' responsibility, as a member of the GRCC's learning community, to access and abide by the college's policies regarding academic conduct http://cms.grcc.edu/departments-navigation/service-departments/student-conduct-office/student-code-conduct/academic-hone .
- **Disability Services**: Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, mental, emotional) requiring accommodations should contact the Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140 for assistance.
- **E-mail**: E-mail is an essential element of this course. Please make sure you check your GRCC e-mail on a regular basis.
- **GRCC Blackboard**: GRCC Blackboard is an essential element of this course. Please make sure you check it on a regularly. Announcements will be posted here, grades maintained and any course materials loaded here.
- **Late Work/ Redo's**: As the assignments in the course are time sensitive and help enhance the learning experience, late assignments will not be accepted.
- **Syllabi Changes**: The syllabi may be adjusted at any point in the course based on student feedback, input or material needing additional coverage in order to better serve the overall learning needs of the class.
- **Class Participation**: Learning happens when you are engaged with what is happening in the present. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices during class to eliminate distractions. College students are expected to engage in thoughtful discussions in class. You are expected read assigned materials before class and prepare such that you have a knowledge base to draw from to participate

thoughtfully in classroom discussions. These points are not available for make up as the learning & participation will occur in the class and can't be recreated individually outside of the group setting.

Learning Resources:

- Blackboard: This class uses Blackboard® (http://bb.grcc.edu). You will use Blackboard® to access assignments, announcement, quizzes, view grades, download and/or print class material.
- Support Services: Students who require additional support must immediately let me know of their specific needs. Every student with a disability has the responsibility to (1) meet the College's qualifications, including essential technical, academic, and institutional standards, (2) identify as an individual with a disability and request accommodations in a timely manner, (3) provide documentation from an appropriate professional source verifying the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the rationale for specific accommodations being recommended, and (4) follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. If you have not met these responsibilities, please contact GRCC's Disability Support Services Program, Student Community Center, Third Floor, Room 368, 616-234-4140. If you have met these responsibilities, please let me know what reasonable and appropriate accommodations you need.
- Counseling & Career Services: The Counseling and Career Center provides personal counseling, career counseling, and academic advising to current GRCC students. Our goal is to empower students to succeed at GRCC and in life. For more information about the variety of services offered visit http://cms.grcc.edu/counseling .
- Library & Learning Commons: The Library & Learning Commons (LLC) acquires resources integral to college learning. Building connections between learners and the information literacy skills they need is our highest priority. To learn more about the vast array of services available to students, visit http://cms.grcc.edu/library .
- Technology Help Desk: The Student Technology Help Desk can assist with Blackboard, password resets, Novell and student e-mail accounts. Hours and other helpful information is at http://www.grcc.edu/sthd. Additionally, you can go to the Open Computer Lab, Room 215 in the Applied Technology Center (ATC), contact them by phone at (616) 234-3123 or e-mail at sthd@grcc.edu.
- Tutoring: To sign up for one-on-one (peer) or group tutoring, go to the Academic Support Center and pick up an application for tutorial assistance. Have your professor sign the application and return it. You will be assigned either to group tutoring or to individual tutoring, depending on your schedule and needs. You can also visit http://www.grcc.edu/tutoring to learn more.
- Computer Labs: Subject-specific labs offer software for that field. For example, the Biology Learning Center offers software for Anatomy and Physiology; the Math Lab offers Maple 10 and the English and Language Lab offers access to reading and foreign language software. You can visit http://cms.grcc.edu/academic-support-center/labs for specific locations and availability.

Date	Topics	Prepared- Due
8/27/12	Getting Started	Purchase Books
8/29/12	Student Success	Chapter 1 Exercise 1.3 Ch 1-3 Wes Moore
9/3/12	HOLIDAY- no class	
9/5/12	Goals & Directions	Journal 1 Entrance Interview Chapter 2 Exercises 2.2, 2.6 Ch 4-6 Wes Moore

9/10/12	Majors & Careers	Chapter 12 Journal 2 Ch 7-8 Wes Moore
9/12/12	Learning Styles	Chapter 3 Exercises 3.2, 3.3
9/17/12	Time Management & Wellness	Chapter 4 Journal 3 Exercises 4.1, 4.2 & 4.6
9/19/12	Fiscal Responsibility	
9/24/12	Think Critically & Creatively	Journal 4 Chapter 5 Exercise 5.1
9/26/12	Technology	Chapter 6 Exercise 6.1
10/1/12	Information Literacy	Journal 5 Exercise 6.3
10/3/12	Listening & Engaging	Chapter 7 Exercise 7.1
10/8/12	Midterm Adjustments	Chapter 9 Exercise 9.6 Journal 6
10/10/12	Memory/ Concentration/ Exams	Chapter 8 Exercise 8.1 Chapter 10 Exercise 10.1
10/15/12	Transfer Planning/MACRAO/ Graduation Requirements	Journal 7
10/17/12	Relationships/ Emotional Intelligence/ Diversity	Chapter 11 Exercises 11.1, 11.2, 11.8
10/22/12	Creating your Future	Chapter 13 Exercise 13.1 Journal 8
10/24/12	Career Presentations	
10/29/12	Career Presentations	Journal 9
10/31/12	Final Exam Review Activity	Exit Interview
11/5/12	Final Exam	Journal 10

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