A DESCRIPTIVE CORRELATION STUDY OF
MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING INFLUENCES ON AFRICAN
AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' GRADUATION STATUS AT A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITY

A Thesis in
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by
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ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this study was to assess the influences of multicultural counseling found for a cohort of African American students, who were first-year students in 1999 and who were targeted students of the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC), at a large public PWI and their degree completion status. Participants of this study were 205 (130=female, 75=male), African American baccalaureate degree-seeking first-year students who voluntarily made contact with a multicultural counselor. This represents 75% (205/273) of the African American undergraduate students admitted in the Fall semester of 1999.

Pre-coded counseling data were combined with student information extracted from the official university data base warehouse. Data analysis was completed using a combination of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Chi square results were used to examine the graduation timeframe (0=graduated within six years or 1=did not graduate within six years) by gender (0=male, 1=female) and by students’ academic college (i.e., 0 = non science colleges and 1 = science colleges). A binary logistic regression was used for assessing the relationship between the primary independent variable, frequency of use of counseling during the six undergraduate years, and college graduation status from the institution while simultaneously controlling for the influence of other variables.

The findings of this current study attempt to address some of the missing elements of counseling by identifying specific reasons why African American students seek to utilize multicultural counseling services and how multicultural counseling use might influence the graduation status of this population.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES........................................................................................................ vi

LIST OF TABLES......................................................................................................... vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER ONE:
BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY
INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................... 1
The Problem and Its Background................................................................................ 1
Why focus on African American college students?.................................................... 1
The Need for Attention to African American Student Retention............................. 2
Gender Considerations.............................................................................................. 4
The Role of Special Counseling on the Retention of African American students........ 6
Purpose of the Study.................................................................................................. 9
Significance of this Study..........................................................................................10

CHAPTER TWO:
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE........................................................................ 10
Retention and Persistence Theory............................................................................... 10
Academic/Social Integration and Interaction................................................................ 13
African American College Students at PWIs.......................................................... 18
Ethnic and Racial Identity........................................................................................ 20
Interacting With the Dominant Culture...................................................................... 22
The Debate for Attention to Special Counseling and Advising............................... 23
Empirical Findings on the Relationships between Counseling/Advising
and Student Retention.............................................................................................. 27
Multicultural Counseling Programs for African American Students at PWIs........... 40

CHAPTER THREE:
PROCEDURES........................................................................................................... 42
METHODOLOGY......................................................................................................... 43
Population.................................................................................................................. 43
Database Variables................................................................................................... 43
Independent Variables............................................................................................. 44
Dependent Variable.................................................................................................. 45
Basis for Statistical Procedures................................................................................ 45
Database Limitation................................................................................................... 48

CHAPTER FOUR:
FINDINGS................................................................................................................... 49
Background.................................................................49
1. Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with the MRC Personnel among African
American students who graduated within the six year timeframe................49
Research Question One..................................................50
2. Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with MRC Personnel among African
American students Admitted into Science Colleges vs. Non-Sciences Colleges......52
3. Comparisons of Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with a
Multicultural Counselor by Graduation Timeframe........................................57
Research Question Two..................................................57
4. Graduation Timeframe among African American Male and Female
Students Who Sought Counseling and Graduated Within 6 Years or
did not Graduate within 6 Years or Less.....................................................60
5. Final Grade Point Average (GPA) by Gender and College at Graduation...........64
6. Logistic Regression Summary and Results: The Influence of Selected
Factors on Time Frame to Graduation.......................................................66

CHAPTER FIVE:
Purpose and Summary of the Study.............................................69
Data and Procedures............................................................70
Discussion of Findings..........................................................73
Conclusions.................................................................85
Implications for Policy and Practice..............................................89
Recommendations and Areas for Future Research.................................96
Closing Summary............................................................99

REFERENCES..............................................................101

APPENDIX A: Pre-coded List of Counseling Contacts...............................114

APPENDIX B: Estimated Freshman Predicted Baccalaureate Science and
Engineering Grade Point Average Chart.............................................115
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with Multicultural Resource Center Personnel.............................................................................................. 51

Figure 2. Distribution of Participants by College Type ........................................ 53

Figure 3. Time to Graduation by College.......................................................... 54

Figure 4. Comparison of Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with Multicultural Resource Center Personnel by College Type........................................ 55

Figure 5. Comparison of Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with Multicultural Resource Center Personnel by Graduation Timeframe......................... 59

Figure 6. Distribution of Participants by Gender ..................................................... 61

Figure 7. Time to Graduation by Gender........................................................... 62

Figure 8. Time to Graduation from Fall Semester 1999...................................... 64

Figure 9. Final GPA by Gender and College ..................................................... 65

Figure 9.1 GPA Trend by Semester for all Graduates ........................................ 66
LIST OF TABLES

Table I. Association of graduation timeframe by college……………………………….. 60

Table II. Association of graduation timeframe by gender……………………………… 63

Table III. Summary of sequential binary logistic regression results with time to graduation as the dependent variable (0 = more than six years to graduation and 1 = within six years to graduation)………………………….. 68
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For much of history, higher education in the United States has been racially segregated. Beginning in the 1960s, large numbers of African American students began attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Fleming, 1984). The sudden influx of African American students created an educational dilemma for college and university professionals: How could they respond to the educational needs of students for whom their institutions were not designed? Most PWIs were founded to educate the White middle class (Carter, 2001; Kovel, 1970). This educational dilemma created new challenges for minority students making a successful transition into higher education.

The majority of first-year students, especially African American students, entering higher education leave their initial college of choice without completing a degree (Tinto, 1993), and national attrition rates for African American students have been increasing since the early 1980s at four-year institutions, both public and private (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2002). The most critical period or stage of vulnerability for African American student attrition continues to be the first year of college, at all types of higher education institutions, including highly selective PWIs (Cheatham, Shelton, & Ray, 1987; Gibbs, 1975; “Learning Slope,” 1991). More than half of all African American students who withdraw from college do so during their first year (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 1999), resulting in a first-year attrition rate of more than 25% at four-year institutions (ACT, 2001).

Why focus on African American college students?

African American college students’ persistence and retention in higher education
is a matter of considerable national interest. Data on African American student persistence at the beginning of the twenty-first century have produced mixed results. According to the American Council on Education the six-year college graduation rate for African American students (40%), falls 21 percent below the 61 percent rate for white students and 25 percent below the 65 percent rate for Asian American students (Wilds, 2000). An analysis of data from 1990 to 2000 revealed that African American students were making great strides in college enrollment and degree attainment and have fulfilled the requirements for degree completion at the highest rates in history (Hoffman & Llagas, 2003) but historically, they are still graduating at rates much lower than white students. These same data from 1990 to 2000 also revealed that the African American college graduation rate had only improved by one percentage point.

The Need for Attention to African American Student Retention

The economic implications of the high rates of attrition for enrollment management was anticipated more than 20 years ago by John Gardner, during the freshman-year experience movement he helped launch: “Higher education must make changes if it is to survive in anything resembling its present form. The student has become a precious commodity. Institutions must now concern themselves with retaining students so that, if nothing else, budgets can be preserved” (Gardner, 1981, p. 79). Tinto (1987) notes further that strengthening institutional efforts aimed at increasing minority student retention may be a more effective enrollment-management strategy than devoting more resources to increasing student recruitment: “As more institutions have come to utilize sophisticated marketing techniques to recruit students, the value of doing so has diminished markedly. Institutions have come to view the retention of students to degree completion as the only reasonable cause of action left to ensure their survival” (Tinto, 1987, p. 2).
The cost effectiveness of focusing on African American student retention as an enrollment management strategy is also argued by Astin (1975), who states,

In four-year institutions, any change that deters students from dropping out can affect three classes of students at once, whereas any change in recruiting practices can affect only one class in a given year. From this viewpoint, investing resources to prevent dropping out may be more cost effective than applying the same resources to more vigorous recruitment (p. 2).

Retention initiatives designed to manage African American student enrollment are estimated to be 3-5 times more cost effective than recruitment efforts, i.e., the cost of recruiting one new student to college approximates the cost of retaining 3-5 already enrolled students (CSRDE, 2001). Another fiscal advantage associated with African American student retention efforts that effectively promote student persistence to graduation is that graduating students are much less likely to default on their student loans than students who drop out due, in large measures, to the fact that graduates are more likely to find gainful employment (Seaks, cited in Levitz, 1993).

Most importantly, however, improving African American student retention not only fulfills the institutional mission of promoting diversity and equity, it also serves the more altruistic, student-centered purpose of promoting learning and development. As Astin (1975) notes: “More important from an educational standpoint, changes that help students complete college, represent a real service to them, whereas successful recruiting efforts may simply change students’ choice of institutions” (p.2).

Lastly, it should not be forgotten that African American student retention is an assessment outcome, and one that is amenable to accurate measurement. Furthermore, retention functions as a fundamental or foundational student outcome, serving as a precondition or prerequisite for meaningful assessment of other outcomes. For example, other commonly assessed outcomes of college, such as knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and attitude change, cannot possibly be accurately measured as final outcomes
of the college experience unless and until students have persisted to completion of the college experience. If the ultimate purpose of assessment is institutional improvement, then improvement in African American student retention should be an intended outcome of any PWI that is serious about using assessment results as a vehicle for promoting positive institutional change. Given the distressingly high levels of African American student attrition at many PWIs, retention represents a student outcome that can be dramatically improved, not only because there is so much room for improvement, but also because it is influenced as much by institutional behavior as it is by student characteristics (e.g., lack of academic motivation or poor academic preparation). Tinto (1987) argues:

Though the intentions and commitment with which individuals enter college matter, what goes on after entry matters more. It is the daily interactions of the person with other members of the college in both the formal and informal academic and social domains of the college and the person’s perception or evaluation of the character of those interactions that in large measure determine decisions as to staying or leaving. It is in this sense that most departures are voluntary. Student retention is at least as much a function of institutional behavior as it is of student behavior (pp. 127, 177).

That institutional behavior and commitment to student success has been developed by the daily interactions students have with student services and special counseling and advising programs and might influence students’ decisions to stay or leave college (Harley, et al, 2002).

*Gender Considerations*

In recent years, research has also focused on the distinct disparities in the graduation rates between African American men and women who attend PWI’s (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Harper, 2004). 44.7 percent of African American women graduate from their first institution in six years, compared to only 34.2 percent of African American men (Horn & Berger, 2004). It’s also worth noting that this trend repeats itself to varying
degrees across every racial and ethnic category, with female students in each case having significantly higher graduation rates than their male counterparts.

The gap in graduation rates between African American men and women often is discussed in terms implying that the central issue is male students doing poorly (Ford & Harris, 1991). But at a number of institutions it might be more accurate to say that the gap is caused by African American female students doing particularly well. For example, there are roughly 1,250 institutions listed in College Results Online database that reported graduation rates for African American women. At more than one-third of those institutions, the six year graduation rate for African American women exceeds the institution’s overall graduation rate. The fact that African American women are both more likely to enter college and more likely to finish once they get there (Horn & Berger, 2004), leads to some very significant differences in higher education attainment between the genders.

Because most African American students (73%) attend PWIs (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002) where retention and persistence and social/academic productivity might be difficult for them, increasing numbers of researchers are trying to understand these variables. Authors such as Fleming (1984); Nettles (1988); and Allen (1992) found that the importance of factors such as emotions, attitudes, perceptions, aspirations, and expectations about college, and as well as factors such as institutional climate, faculty, and professional staff employed by the university all play a significant role in student adjustment. Williams and Leonard (1988) suggested that poor academic preparation led to attrition from college, whereas Guiffrida (2003) discussed some of the negative influences of non-academic factors such as interpersonal relationships, social and
academic integration, and ability to deal with racism. Rendón, Jaloma, and Nora (2000) reported African American male and female students both struggle with finances, academic adjustment, living conditions, emotional-psychological concerns, career-vocational concerns, and to a lesser degree, peer relationships, and family relationship concerns. Obviously, many of these factors have influenced the graduation status of African American students in one way or another. Research on the use of counseling might also be beneficial in understanding how many of these factors influence the graduation status of African American students.

Tinto, in his 1993 theory review, acknowledged the importance of policy-relevant research and the importance of the institution in enhancing retention. This acknowledgement is extremely critical to retention research because when theoretical propositions are not compared across different subgroups or when diverse and culturally-driven theoretical views are not incorporated in retention studies, institutional policies and practices cannot truly detect or address differences between subgroups or genders (Tinto, 1993). Theories developed without using African American male and female student perspectives might miss important details and nuances about the connection between students’ cultural differences, realities, and collegiate experiences. For those reasons highlighted by Tinto (1993) and others (Rendón, Jaloma, and Nora, 2000), this study will explore the retention of African American students and how special counseling might influence their graduation rates.

*The role of multicultural counseling on the retention of African American students*

Cheatham and Trippi (1989) studied student characteristics and the features of a multicultural counseling program on the retention of African American first-year students
at a PWI. They reported that the participants sought counseling for six primary concerns: academic adjustment, academic skills deficiency, course scheduling, financial need, the initial interview, and understanding institutional procedures and policies. They concluded that multicultural counseling services are beneficial to African American first-year students when the counseling relationship is established early in the first year and when counseling is geared to actively resolving specific, concrete, short-range concerns using action-oriented strategies. In addition, this study found that multicultural counseling is beneficial when an ongoing relationship is maintained to enable interactions addressing long-term development activities and the limited utility of “intrusive” counseling is recognized. In this context, intrusive counseling refers to the counselors’ initiating contact with students and aggressively bringing support services to them, rather than offering services passively and hoping that students will come and take advantage of them on their own accord. For example, among independent variables included to assess the association of counseling characteristics, the number of in-person contacts occurring between the student and a counselor was related positively to persistence in college, \( \chi^2(1, N=212)=5.08, p<.05 \), and to the persistence in degree status \( \chi^2(1, N=212)=4.54, p<.05 \), of African American first-year students. This finding indicates that African American first-year students who maintain an ongoing relationship with a counselor, as indicated by the number of in-person contacts, are significantly more likely to persist and to continue in good academic standing than are African American first-year students having less well-maintained relationships with a counselor (Cheatham & Trippi, 1989). Cheatham and Trippi (1989) have advocated for additional studies using a longitudinal
design to assess the effects or influences of multicultural counseling programs on the graduation rates of African American students.

Those responsible for retaining and assisting African American students must use models of student development that take into account the unique needs and experiences that African American students bring to the college campus. Although a direct, causal connection between counseling and retention has yet to be established, a strong case can be made that counseling exerts a significant impact on student retention through its positive association with, and mediation of, variables that are strongly correlated with student persistence. These variables include: (1) student satisfaction with the college experience, (2) effective educational and career planning and academic major decision making, (3) student utilization of campus support services, (4) student-faculty contact outside the classroom, and (5) student mentoring (Winston, Ender, & Miller, 1982; Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites, & Associates, 1984; Frost, 1991; Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). Arguably, if counseling is intended to assist students in fostering the above orientations, behaviors, and relationships, then it is likely that such counseling would be expected to enhance retention. Alternatively, special counseling can be considered as an additional sixth variable that might also exert an influence on the graduation status of this population, yet its influence has, unfortunately, not been the focus of much prior research.

The research cited in the above paragraph has addressed these variables as related to access, progress, and graduation of African American students, particularly focusing on how counseling interventions facilitate or strengthen development of these variables. Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003) noted, however, that research on the foregoing and similar
variables cited in the above paragraph has provided valuable insights for addressing minority students’ participation in higher education. Inconsistencies in terminology, methodology, and a dearth of coherent theoretical models, however, have resulted in contradictory and ambiguous findings and thus led to the purpose of this study. Mow and Nettles (1990) and Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003) have called for evaluation research and for longitudinal designs as contrasted with the more common cross-sectional, descriptive research designs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess influences of multicultural counseling found for a cohort of African American students who were first-year students in 1999 and who were targeted students of the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) at a large public PWI university and graduated within six years. The MRC is a special academic support unit specifically charged to provide academic counseling services to African American and other students attending this university campus. The MRC staff also assists students in identifying various university offices and services designed to ensure their academic and personal development needs are met. MRC staff members have educational backgrounds in various academic and professional disciplines, generally a master’s degree level preparation, and attention is given to maintaining an ethnic and gender composition of the MRC staff that is representative of the student body served. For this study, two questions will be investigated: (a) For what purposes do African American undergraduate students use special counseling services? (b) What influence does the use of multicultural counseling services have on African American undergraduate students’ graduation status?
Significance of this study

This study will help to identify specific indexes of counseling use that have a bearing on the scholastic achievement of African American students. It will further help to identify specific junctures in the undergraduate experience of African American students in which those counseling interventions might promote students’ development and increase the probability of graduation. This study will also help to clarify the role and contributions of counselors who deliver unique services to African American students on terms acceptable to this particular student population. Finally, this study will also contribute to what is already known about the dynamics of persistence and degree completion particularly among African American students.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Retention and Persistence Theory

Institutional student retention has been actively researched for more than seven decades (IRP 2003), resulting in a substantial body of literature on the various factors associated with student persistence, and indicating a wide spectrum of interventions geared toward improving retention that still may be needed particularly as it relates to racial and gender subgroups. Institutional retention research traditionally concentrates on analyses of graduation rates, examination of persistence patterns, investigation of student attrition behaviors, analyses of historical trends and facts, and explanations of the psychosocial dynamics associated with retention (Tinto, 1993; IRP 2003). As such, researchers and practitioners can still improve upon some of the already developed models and instruments to assess, predict, and enhance student retention. For example the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange reports that the first year is the most crucial period for student retention, with 21 percent dropping out during, or at the
end of, their first year. While degree completion requires more than four years for most students, the eventual degree completion rate for entering first year students was estimated to be 58%. Institutions with a higher percentage of part-time undergraduate enrollments tend to have lower retention and graduation rates. The Consortium also reports that retention and graduation rates were consistently higher for women (CSRDE report 2000-01). Although these reports indicate higher graduation rates among women, research on the factors that might have influenced these higher rates can still be explored.

Researchers have adapted various theoretical frameworks to construct models that explain, describe or predict student persistence, attrition and retention. Some of these frameworks or models include: (1) sociological perspectives that focus on the influence of various social forces on college student departure or withdrawal (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005). (2) Organizational perspectives that focus on the influence of organizational characteristics and processes on college student departure or withdrawal (Braxton and Lee, 2005). (3) Economic perspectives that focus on the influence of cost/benefit analysis on college student decisions to persist or to depart (Bean and Eaton, 2000; Tillman, Sr. 2002). (4) Psychological perspectives that focuses on the influence of psychological characteristics and processes on college student departure (Braxton and Lien, 2000). Although these frameworks attempt to explain, describe or predict student persistence, attrition and retention, these frameworks were not intended to remedy or enhance retention. Applying these four perspectives to counseling, however, might conceptually identify additional reasons why these four perspectives indeed influence the retention and degree completion for African American students. For example, Cheatham and Trippi (1989) studied student characteristics and the features of a specialized counseling program on the retention of African American first-year students and concluded that multicultural counseling services are beneficial to African American first-year students when the counseling relationship is established early in the first year and when counseling is geared to actively resolving specific, concrete, short-range concerns using
action-oriented strategies. The previous four frameworks focus primarily on the sociological, organizational, economical and psychological perspectives that influence student departure as opposed to how a particular student service, like counseling, can complement these four perspectives and identify specific reasons why these perspectives might influence retention and the degree completion status of African American students.

Various approaches, however, have been taken by many of the researchers with descriptive and/or prescriptive models developed to enhance retention. Some early studies on persistence and retention were written within a cause-effect context with a descriptive section on cause and a prescriptive section for solutions. Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement and Tinto’s (1993) theory of student integration and model were two such examples that focused on how majority and minority students become academically and socially integrated into institutional life. Some later research efforts expanded to include a variety of themes and factors influencing retention. One example is the shifting of the focus from students’ actions to institutional variables and intervention in facilitating retention (Rend n, 1994; Jalomo, 1995; Nora, Kraemer, & Itzen, 1997). Another example is the expansion of focus from traditional to “non-traditional” students at different strata within the student population in higher education (Filkins, et al., 2001). An example of “non-traditional” student populations consisted primarily of African American and/or minority student populations (Bean & Hull 1984; Fuertes & Seldacek 1994; Grandy 1998; Nora 1987; Tinto 1993; and Ting 2000).

The current trend in research appears to be to validate or reject previous theories and models and emphasize the influence of developmental factors on success in college. Themes of developmental factors often focus on psychological, maturational, and dispositional variables of students. Bean (2005) introduces nine themes of college student retention that affect retention: [students’] intentions, institutional fit and institutional commitment (loyalty), psychological processes and key attitudes, students interacting with the institution and the external environment, academics, social factors,
bureaucratic factors, the external environment, the student’s background, and money and finances. Additional factors, such as socioeconomic status, prior academic preparation, student-faculty interactions, and student involvement activities have also been explored by researchers in recent studies (Nora 1987; Tinto 1993; and Ting 2000). Similarly, these themes and/or factors did not attempt to explore the study of special counseling services and its influence on the graduation status of African American students.

Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure (a sociological perspective) has been extensively documented to study how students become academically and socially integrated into institutional life. Tinto argues that the majority of colleges are made up of several communities or subcultures. Rather than conforming to one dominant culture in order to persist, students would have to locate at least one community in which to find membership and support (Tinto, 2004). Further, Tinto notes that membership does not require a full sharing of values. Instead, only some degree of consensus is necessary. Consequently, Tinto argues that the use of the term membership is more applicable than integration as relates to minority students making the transition at PWIs. The next section will focus on the academic/social integration (membership) and interaction as it relates to the retention of African American students’ adjusting to college.

**Academic/Social Integration (Membership) and Interaction**

Researchers have found that cultural separation and transition to college are the initial processes associated with Tinto’s student retention model (Rend n, 1994; Jalomo, 1995; Nora, Kraemer, and Itzen, 1997). Tinto (1987) acknowledged that family and culture may play an important part in student decisions to depart from college. Tinto (1987) also stressed that “in some situations, external social systems may work counter to the demands of institutional life. When the academic and social systems of the institution are weak, the countervailing external demands may seriously undermine the individual’s ability to persist on to completion” (p. 108). Tinto’s (1975, 1987) departure model is appropriate and valid for all students regardless of their varied ethnic, racial, economic,
and social backgrounds. Tinto (1993) elaborates on the importance of supportive student communities for students of color who may experience difficulties making the transition to college and becoming incorporated. Tinto (1993) also notes the need to build inclusive campuses, explaining that “to be fully effective, college communities, academic and social, must be inclusive of all students who enter (p. 187).” The next stage, however, tends to involve the incorporation of students, which happens when they make a connection with institutional life. Tinto (1987) noted that “eventual persistence requires that individuals make the transition to college and become incorporated into the ongoing social and intellectual life of the college” (p.126). Tinto’s argument is that integration is related to membership. “Integration (membership) can be understood to refer to the extent which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or in the subgroups of which the individual is a part” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 51).

Tierney (1992) argues: “The search for an understanding about why students leave college is not merely of theoretical interest; if a model may be built that explains student departure then it may be possible for colleges to retain students” (p. 604). Nora, Kraemer, and Itzen (1997) and Nora and Cabrera (1993) argue that current quantitative models must include factors that are able to differentiate among racial and ethnic groups or must include measurement approaches and techniques that provide indicators of constructs that reflect racial, ethnic, and cultural difference.

While Tinto (1987) does indicate that “differences in institutional rates of departure may arise out of discernible differences in the structure of institutional academic and social systems” (p. 107), the overall tone of social/academic integration theory is that individuals, not the system, are responsible for departure. Tierney (1992) elaborates on this point by arguing that social integrationists tend to use anthropological terms in an individualist, rather than a collective manner. Individuals attend college,
become integrated or not, leave or stay, fail or succeed. Absent from the traditional social integrationist view are the distinctions among cultures, differences among student experiences with regard to class, race, gender and sexual orientation, and the role of group members and the institution in assisting students to succeed. Tinto’s (1993) model explains that “at its core, is a model of educational communities that highlights the critical importance of student engagement or involvement in the learning communities of the college” (p.132). Consequently, it becomes important to address some of the problematic issues related to the involvement dimension implicit in the Tinto model.

Astin’s (1985) theory of student involvement might be one of the most widely recognized models for student development. According to involvement theory, the individual plays a central role in determining the extent and nature of growth according to the quality of effort or involvement with the resources provided by the institution (Astin, 1985). Astin’s involvement theory is based on the notion that students tend to invest psychological energy in objects outside themselves such as friends, families, schooling, and employment. Astin (1984) defined involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p.297). Indeed, research indicates that the more time and energy students devote to learning and the more intensely they engage in their education, the greater the achievement, satisfaction with educational experiences, and persistence in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987).

Astin’s (1993) theory illustrates a few main points. Postulate one states Astin’s definition of involvement, showing that involvement happens on several levels. It is through postulate two that a key element is provided, that involvement happens on a continuum and involvement is different for everyone. Involvement never ceases in a college experience, from the application process to the university through graduation, a student is exposed to an abundant amount of objects that impact their development and growth, as well as the decisions they make. Postulate three is fairly self-explanatory, in
that involvement can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. This dissertation, through the quantitative methods, will be able to show when African American students are getting involved in multicultural counseling and the degree of their involvement in multicultural counseling.

Astin’s fifth postulate brings his theory to a close, stating that the duties lay within the policies and procedures to allow for students to grow and develop through their involvement. This theory of involvement is best researched through Astin’s I-E-O methodology. Astin has developed and refined a method for studying student development in college. His input, environment, and outcome method (I-E-O) is what he used to perform his 1985 study. I-E-O is broken down as: “Inputs refer to the characteristics of the student at the time of initial entry to the institution; environment refers to the various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed; and outcomes refers to the student’s characteristics after exposure to the environment” (Astin, 1993; p. 7).

By using this model, students, faculty, and policy makers are able to better understand what they are achieving, how they are achieving it, and if the expectations are being achieved, for example graduation. The I-E-O model will also be implemented in this study by exploring the influences of multicultural counseling provided by the institution. It is through his involvement theory and his I-E-O model that involvement studies, similar to this dissertation, can be better formed and structured, to allow for the greatest use and analysis of data.

While both Tinto and Astin would agree that the institution plays an important role in facilitating involvement, and in fact Tinto’s 1993 revised model emphasized this point, practitioners have concentrated on the individual responsibility aspect. The result is that practitioners have resorted to offerings programs to help students get involved, but have not focused on active outreach to students. Consequently, few dropout prone students actually get involved. If practitioners accept the cultural separation assumption
without understanding its inherent trauma for minority students, then practitioners might see involvement as a relatively easy task since they will also assume that all students, regardless of their cultural and ethnic background, are ready, willing, and able to get involved. Certain students might have more or less of a proclivity to take the initiative to become involved. Outreach puts the responsibility of the involvement on the institution rather than the student.

Scholars who have studied minority students (Jalomo, 1995; Rendon, 1994; Terenzini et al., 1994) have made some significant contributions and modifications to involvement theory. While the importance of involvement cannot be negated, these researchers argue that many students, especially minority students, find it difficult to get involved. There’s some important difference between traditional and minority students that were not explained in the original conception of student involvement theory. For example, most traditional students often come from upper to middle class backgrounds, are predominately White, and typically come from families where at least one parent has attended college and where the expectation of attending college is high (Rendon, 1994). For most traditional students, attending college is a normal pattern of stratification and is a part of family tradition (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Consequently, they are more likely to understand the values, traditions, and practices of college to their academic advantage (Harley, Jolivette, McCormick, & Tice, 2002). Involvement theory does not emphasize the fact that most four year colleges are set up to facilitate involvement for traditional students. On the other hand, minority students often come from working class backgrounds (some are considered low-income), work at least part-time, are predominately African American or Hispanic/Latino, and first-generation or the first in their family to ever attend college (Rendon, 1994; Terenzini, Allison, Gregg, Jalomo, Millar, Rendon, & Upcraft, 1993; Jalomo, 1995). The next three sections will take into account the theories of student involvement and how those theories might address the issues of identity, retention, and departure for African American students at PWIs.
African American College Students at PWIs

Retention studies indicate that African American college students at PWIs experience isolation, alienation, and hostility on campus (Allen, 1992; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Fleming 1984; Love, 1993; Smedley, Myers, & Herrell, 1993). Allen (1992) highlighted that many African American students have found the PWI environment to be isolating due to the lack of African American representation amongst its student, faculty, and administrative populations. In addition, the PWI environment is often counterproductive to African American students’ intellectual and social growth, which negatively affects their ability to persist given the link of involvement in campus life to retention (Fleming, 1984; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockreil, 1996; MacKay & Kuh, 1994). Mow and Nettles (1990) found that 92% of African American students in their study identified feelings of alienation and loneliness as reasons for dropping out. Bennett and Okinaka found that as African American students persisted to graduation, “the more dissatisfied and alienated they became” (p.50). They found that even though African American students’ persisted and might have graduated, the isolation and alienation they faced from peers and faculty left them dissatisfied with their overall college experience.

Smedley et al. (1993) found that minority students, especially African American students, faced unique stresses at PWIs that contribute to their perceiving the environment as being hostile such as “experiences with racism, questions about their right to be on campus” (p. 435), and “perceptions of negative expectations from White peers” (p. 447). These stresses can undermine and place doubt in students’ academic confidence as well as their academic and social integration (Fleming, 1984; Smedley et al.). Because the institution may not adequately address their needs, many African
American students feel abandoned and disconnected from their peers (Fleming, 1984) who perceive them as intellectually inferior. Gossett et al. (1996) found that 56% of African American students perceived their White peers as believing that African Americans are not good students. Research further shows that African American students are perceived by their White peers as less capable and this leads to low academic achievement (Allen, 1988; & Hummel & Steele, 1996). Academic achievement often suffers because some African American students might internalize the belief that their White peers question their ability and this questioning may affect their intellectual functioning and performance. Many African American students have contemplated dropping out because their academic capabilities were constantly questioned (Feagin & Sikes, 1995).

Researchers have compared the difference (Bell-Rose, 1999; Miller, 1995) between African American college students and college students of other ethnic identities. African American students continue to face inequities when compared to other ethnic populations. Even African American students who are achieving and succeeding in college continue to need the support of educational programs and the like (Bell-Rose 1998; Fries Britt, 1998; Harper, 2005; Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998). Again, Fleming (1985) argues that African American students who enter PWIs with a similar academic profile of their White peers experience academic deterioration due to the stressors in the college environment. This academic deterioration is evident by the fact that GPAs and academic performance of African American often decline at PWIs (Fleming 1985).
Researchers have strived to understand what factors lead to the deterioration of African American student academic performance compared to their White and Asian American peers (Allen, 1992; Fleming 1984; Miller, 1995; Mow & Nettles, 1990). Tinto (1993) presents a compelling framework for understanding the factors that lead to the deterioration of African American student academic performance. The psychological, emotional, and identity development concerns reported by Tinto (1993) represent concerns about discrimination with resulting feelings of frustration and isolation, and concerns about lack of assertiveness. If an academic environment is experienced as prejudicial and lacking social integration, it may stimulate a coping pattern that has been described by Tinto (1993) as withdrawal. Tinto (1993, p. 81) identifies student departure as taking two forms, academic dismissal and voluntary withdrawal. Only 15 to 25 percent, however, of all institutional departures come as a result of academic failure. The remaining 75 to 80 percent come as a result of voluntary withdrawal. Tinto’s (1993) model proposes that individuals enter institutions of higher education with a range of differing family and community backgrounds (e.g. socioeconomic status, parental education), a variety of personal attributes (e.g. gender, race), skills (social, intellectual), financial resources, dispositions (e.g. motivations, political references), and various types of pre-college educational experiences and achievements, including identity development. These attributes are filtered through the students’ commitment to the institution and their personal goal to graduate. Each attribute, including ethnic and racial identity, is posited as having a direct impact upon departure or withdrawal from college.

**Ethnic and Racial Identity**

A number of authors have cited the need to expand the notion of identity
development to include attitudes about the race to which one belongs, that is, the role of racial or ethnic identity (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Cross, 1971, 1978; Lock, 1992; Parham, 1989; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). Lock (1992) indicated that African American students may hold doubts about their ethnic identities and that they must put psychological energy into protecting themselves against identity loss. Bhatia and Ram (2001) contrasted this issue for African American students with that of Whites, in which many Whites do not see themselves as White and thus may not hold a set of attitudes about the racial group to which they belong.

Parham (1989) suggested that the racial identity of an African American person is “potentially influenced by his/her life stage and the developmental tasks associated with that period of life” (p. 196). Parham (1989) also described “how the stages of racial identity may be manifested at three phases of life (late adolescence/early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood)” (p.197).

The general concept of identity must also be expanded and viewed from a different perspective for African American students. Lock (1992) addressed this in terms of the importance of self-concept and self-appraisal. Others (e.g., Harley, Jolivette, McCormick, & Tice 2002) addressed duality or even multiplicity with the African American students must struggle, an identity consideration not typically faced by majority students. Hermans (2001) indicated, many minority students live and learn in bicultural/biracial/bilingual environments, which are different from and frequently in conflict with those experienced at college. According to Leach and Sullivan (2001), African Americans experience depersonalization, which brings with it a loss of one’s sense of identity, pride, and accomplishment. All of these authors suggest the multiplicity of roles or identities, the implication of contextual identities for students of nondominant cultures, and the intense struggle for African American students at predominately White institutions to develop identity when the environment seems to work at cross-purposes to such development.
Furthermore, identity development, according to Lock (1992), relates both to a developmental stage in the life of an individual and to a period in history. Thus, his statement provides strong support for Hermans’ (2001) notion of the importance of considering the current social environment. Robinson and Howard-Hamilton (2000), in a series of studies conducted at several universities, found that the African American students’ sense of identity involves both uniquely personal and collective elements that result from social interaction and group identifications and demonstrated that the students used being African American as the basis for collective elements of identity.

Interacting With the Dominant Culture

Another aspect of cultural identity is the role that assimilation and acculturation play in the development of racial and ethnic minority students. Because White students are part of the majority and dominant culture, the issue of assimilation/acculturation does not emerge for students of the dominant culture. For African American students, however, the task of adjusting to living/learning in a campus environment that varies from the accustomed cultural frame of reference is a most important issue (Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001).

Ancis and Szymanski (2001) cited numerous studies in which African American students suffer from a series of identity problems resulting from culture conflict. Through clinical experience with African American students experiencing ethnic or cultural conflicts, Ancis and Szymanski identified four models of adaptation to the college and university environment. These four modes are withdrawal, described as movement away from the dominant culture and is characterized by apathy and depression; separation, described as movement against the dominant culture and is characterized by anger, hostility, and conflicts with the dominant culture; assimilation, described as movement toward the dominant culture and is characterized by social anxiety and desire for acceptance; and affirmation, described as movement with the dominant culture and is characterized by self-acceptance, high achievement, and a
positive ethnic identity. Three of these models of adaptation are similar to Constantine, Juby and Liang’s (2001) three major modes of response to oppression. Among the 61 students in Ancis and Szymanski’s study, withdrawal was the most frequent response mode. Ancis and Szymanski also found that 70% of those students who described themselves as feeling adequate were in the affirmation category, and 61% of those who felt inadequate were in the withdrawal category.

In examining four different categories of socioeconomic class, class differences were found among three of the four response categories. For students of the two highest socioeconomic classes, affirmation and assimilation were the second and third most frequent response modes. There were no students in the separation category among the highest class, and none in the assimilation or affirmation categories among the lowest class. Among working-class students (third lowest class), there were fewer in the affirmation category and more in the separation and assimilation categories than there were students in the top two socioeconomic classes. In theory, if colleges and universities are to achieve the lofty ideals that they have set forth in bridging the gaps between assimilation and separation of different socioeconomic classes, they must continue to approach the education and retention of African American students in a more inclusive manner. As indicated above, ethnic identity and interacting with the dominate culture are two major challenges for some African American students at PWI’s. The utilization and attention given to multicultural counseling and advising might be a starting point for some African American students to successfully meet the challenges of developing their ethnic identity while interacting with the dominate culture.

The Debate for Attention to Multicultural Counseling

Throughout the last three decades, multicultural counseling services were devised for minority students and/or low-performing students attending PWIs. Considerable literature addresses counseling provided to improve the scholastic achievement of low-
performing students (Constantine, Juby, & Liang, 2001; Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001; Harley, et al, 2002).

Research findings, in general, do not indicate that the provision of counseling services is an effective strategy for improving the overall achievement level of low-performing students (Herr, 1985; Tierney, 1992). In studies comparing group differences on measures of performance and college completion, low-performing students receiving counseling services generally have not been found to achieve at a higher level, on the average, than low-performing student included in control or comparison groups (Herr, 1985; Tierney, 1992; Bean and Eaton, 2000).

Other findings suggest that the effects of counseling on the scholastic achievement of college students may be mediated by various student and counselor characteristics, and by the conditions under which counseling services are provided. For example, Pinto and Feigenbaum (1974), in addition to their findings suggesting no overall effects based on treatment versus control group assignment, reported significant differences in student achievement when the data were desegregated by a counselor. This finding is critical because it indicates that when students develop a connection and/or form certain relationships with a particular counselor, there are different levels of student achievement based on the counselor-student relationship. Similarly, in an even earlier study, Tyler (1969) concluded that the effects of counseling on scholastic achievement may be mediated by the student’s level of ability, with greater effects to be expected for moderate to high performing students, and also by the student’s willingness to participate in counseling. This finding concludes that students who are already achieving academically and decide to utilize counseling tend to continue to achieve at
high levels after participating in counseling and thus counseling is positively correlated with their success in college.

Counseling and advising are one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience that affect student decisions about staying or leaving (ACT, 2001). Conceptually, multicultural counseling is critical to the success of some African American students, but it may be that it hasn’t been found to have consistent effects because of various missing elements. Findings from national counseling/advising surveys, conducted regularly for the past 25 years by American College Testing (ACT), repeatedly point to the following elements as being essential to, but often absent from, counseling/advising programs in higher education.

1. *Formation of a program mission statement that clearly articulates the meaning and purpose of multicultural counseling.*

Only 54% of postsecondary institutions have a written statement that articulates the purposes and procedures of their counseling/advising program (Crockett, Habley, & Cowart, 1987). At best, this suggests a lack of clarity about program mission and goals; at worst, it suggests that multicultural counseling is not considered to be a signature educational program with important goals and objectives.

2. *Provision of sufficient incentives, recognition, and reward for effective multicultural counseling.*

A recent survey of academic practices at nearly 1,000 colleges and universities revealed that only 12% of postsecondary institutions offered incentives or rewards that recognize outstanding counseling/advising (Policy Center on the First Year of College, 2003). In a review of national survey data relating to counselor/advisor evaluation and rewards, Creamer & Scott (2000) argued that: “The failure of most institutions to conduct
systematic evaluations of advisors is explained by a number of factors. The most potent reason, however, is probably that the traditional reward structure often blocks the ability to reward counselors who are genuinely committed to advising” (p.39)

3. Establish criteria for the recruitment, selection, and deployment of multicultural counselors.

Nearly 68% of postsecondary institutions surveyed have no criteria for selecting counselors/advisors (Crockett, Habley, & Cowart, 1987), suggesting lack of attention to professional preparation of multicultural counselors and indifference to the identification of counselors most qualified to work with students who are at risk for attrition, e.g., underrepresented African American students at PWIs.

4. Substantive orientation, training, and development of multicultural counselors.

Habley (2000) conducted an analysis of findings from five national surveys of academic counseling and concluded: “A recurrent theme, found in all five ACT surveys, is that training, evaluation, and recognition and reward have been, and continue to be, the weakest links in academic advising throughout the nation. These important institutional practices in support of quality advising are at best unsystematic and at worst nonexistent” (p. 40). This conclusion, based on national surveys, is reinforced by national reports on the status of American higher education. For example, scholars at the National Institute of Education (1984), concluded that, “Advisement is one of the weakest links in the education of college students” (p.31). Similarly, a national report issued by the Carnegie Foundation, based on three years of campus visits and extensive national survey research, arrived at the following conclusion: “We have found advising to be one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience. Only about a third of colleges in our study had a quality advisement program that helped students’ think carefully about their academic
options” (Boyer, 1987, p. 51). Inconsistencies in the terminology, methodology, and the
dearth of a coherent theoretical model of this survey, however, have resulted in findings
that are contradictory and ambiguous. Researchers have called for the evaluation of
research designs that contrast with more empirical findings on the relationships between
counseling and student retention (Noel & Levitz, 1995). Perhaps, if the four elements
above were incorporated into multicultural counseling, the relationship between
multicultural counseling services and degree completion for African American students
might improve.

**Empirical Findings on the Relationships between Academic Counseling/Advising and Student Retention**

While there appears to be a long-standing logical link between high-quality
counseling/advising and high rates of student retention, their empirical connection has yet
to be systematically demonstrated. Described below is a series of research findings that
provide evidence for an empirical link, albeit indirect, between academic
counseling/advising and factors or conditions that are strongly correlated with student
retention.

**College Satisfaction, Academic Counseling/Advising, and Student Retention**

There is a well established empirical relationship between students’ level of
satisfaction with the postsecondary institution they are attending and their rate of
retention at that institution (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985), for example, college
satisfaction is a primary predictor of student persistence (Noel & Levitz, 1995).
Furthermore, college satisfaction is an assessment outcome that has been found to be the
least influenced or confounded by students’ college entry characteristics, for example,
academic preparation, educational aspirations, gender, and socioeconomic status (Astin,
Research on student satisfaction with the quality of academic counseling/advising in higher education reveals a pattern of disappointing findings. Astin (1993) reports the results of a national survey in which counseling/advising ranked 25th among the 27 different types of services evaluated by students, with only 40% of the surveyed students indicating that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of academic counseling/advising they received at their college. Ender, Winston, & Miller (1984) conclude that, “The greatest difficulty students cite with the quality of their academic experiences is counseling/advising” (p.14). Ironically, despite widespread dissatisfaction with advising, students express a strong desire for counselor/advisor contact and place a high value on academic counseling relative to other student services (Wyckoff, 1999).

Given the fact that student satisfaction is an outcome that is unlikely to be confounded or changed by students’ personal characteristics, its established association with student retention, plus empirical evidence pointing to low levels of student satisfaction with academic counseling/advising in higher education, it is reasonable to conclude that institutional efforts that are intentionally designed to improve student satisfaction with academic counseling/advising should serve to improve students’ level of college satisfaction and, in turn, their retention to degree completion.

Empirical evidence for a relationship between student satisfaction with the quality of counseling/advising received at their college and their retention at that college is provided by Metzner (1989), who conducted a longitudinal study of first-year to sophomore retention rates of students enrolled at a public university. The research involved a large sample of first-year students and it included a sizable number of
influential student variables (e.g., students’ academic preparation, employment status while in college, college grade point average, and college satisfaction). Results from this study revealed that students who perceived counseling/advising to be of good quality withdrew from the university at a rate that was 25% lower than that of students who reported receiving poor counseling/advising, and they withdrew at a rate that was 40% less than that of students who received no counseling/advising at all. Further data analysis revealed that high-quality counseling/advising had a statistically significant, indirect effect on student persistence, which was compounded by its positive correlation with students’ level of college satisfaction and its negative correlation with students’ intent to leave the university (Metzner, 1989).

National surveys of student retention practices provide additional evidence for a link between institutional improvements made in the quality of counseling/advising delivered to students and improvement in student retention. For example, in a national survey of 944 colleges and universities, college administrators identified inadequate academic counseling/advising as the number one characteristic linked to student attrition on their campuses; the same administrators reported that improvement of academic counseling/advising services was the most common retention strategy adopted by their institutions (Beal & Noel, 1980). The effectiveness of this institutional strategy is suggested by other national survey data indicating that institutions which make improvements in their academic advising programs experience substantial gains in their student retention rates (Cartensen & Silberhorn, 1979).

Consistent with these survey findings are the on site observations of Noel (1985), who reports: “In our extensive work on campuses over the years, [we] have found that
institutions where significant improvement in retention rates has been made, almost with exception, give extra attention to careful life planning and to academic advising” (p. 13).

**Effective Decision Making regarding Academic Majors/Career Planning, Academic Counseling/Advising, and Student Retention**

Retention research suggests that student commitment to their educational and career goals is perhaps the strongest factor associated with student persistence to degree completion (Wyckoff, 1999). Thus, effective counseling/advising can exert appreciable impact on student retention through its influence on students’ educational and career planning and academic major decision making. The need for student support in the academic planning and decision making process is highlighted by research findings, which indicate that (a) three of every four students are uncertain or tentative about their career choice upon entering college (Titley & Titley, 1980; Frost, 1991), (b) only 8% of new students feel they know “a great deal about their intended major” (Lemoine, cited in Erickson & Summers, 1991) (c) over half of all students who enter college with a declared major change their mind at least once before they graduate (Foote, 1980; Gordon, 1984), and (d) only one senior out of three will major in the same field they preferred as a first-year student (Willingham, 1985). This degree of student uncertainty and propensity for changing academic majors has been reported at all types of institutions, including highly selective private universities (Marchese, 1992), large research universities (“What We Know About First-Year Students,” 1996; What Do I Want to Be,” 1997), and small liberal arts colleges (“Alpha Gives Undecided Students a Sense of Identity,” 1996).

Such findings strongly suggest that students’ final decisions about majors do not occur before entering college, but typically materialize during the college experience.
Thus, it is not accurate to assume that students who enter college with declared majors are truly decided majors; instead, it is more accurate to conclude that 75% of all students entering college are actually undecided about their academic major, and at least half of all declared majors are prematurely decided majors, who may eventually change their minds (Marchese, 1992).

Actually, some of this indecisiveness and changing of majors might be healthy, reflecting initial exploration of educational goals that usually accompany personal maturation and increased experience with the college curriculum. It might be unrealistic to expect first-year students to make long term educational commitments until they have gained experience with specific courses in various academic programs that comprise the college curriculum, some of which they may or may not have encountered in high school. Tinto (1993) argues:

Among any population of young adults who are just beginning in earnest their search for adult identity, it would be surprising indeed if one found that most were very clear about their long-term goals. The college years are an important growing period in which new social and intellectual experiences are sought as a means of coming to grips with the issue of adult careers. They enter college with the hope that they will be able to formulate for themselves, not for their parents, a meaningful answer to that important question. Lest we forget, the college experience is as much, if not more, one of discovery as one of confirmation (p. 40).

Some of the indecisiveness and changing of majors may also result from, “students being pushed into careers by their families, while others have picked one just to relieve their anxiety about not having a career choice. Still others may have picked popular or lucrative careers, knowing nothing of what they’re really like or what it takes to prepare for them” (Upcraft, Finney, & Garland, 1984, p. 18).

The relationship between effective educational decision making and student retention is empirically documented by Astin (1975), whose research indicates that
prolonged indecision about an academic major is correlated with student attrition.

Lenning, Beal, and Sauer (1980) also report that students’ motivation and commitment correlates positively with persistence to graduation, and this correlation has been found to hold true for both men and women (Anderson, 1988). In addition, Willingham (1985) reports “poor sense of direction” to be one of the most frequently cited reasons identified by students as a factor that detracted from their experiencing a more successful and satisfying college career. In fact, Levitz and Noel (1989) found “lack of certainty about a major” to be the number one reason cited by high-achieving students for their decision to drop out of college. The implication of these findings for academic counseling/advising is suggested by survey data gathered from 947 institutions by Beal and Noel (1980), who found that, “many students transfer or sometimes drop out because they do not know that a particular course of study is available at their college, or because they think they cannot have a particular option in their program of studies” (p. 103).

College students clearly need support from effective academic counselors/advisors to negotiate the challenging and sometimes confusing process of educational planning and academic major selection. Tinto (1993) states:

It is part of the educational mandate of institutions of higher education to assist maturing youth in coming to grips with the important question of adult careers. The regrettable fact is that some institutions do not see student uncertainty in this light. They prefer to treat it as a deficiency in student development rather than as an expected part of that complex process of personal growth. The implications of such views for policy are not trivial [because] unresolved intentions over an extended period can lead to departure both from the institution and from the higher education enterprise as a whole. When plans remain unformulated over extended periods of time, students are more likely to depart without completing their degree programs (p. 41).

The research reviewed in the above sections clearly indicates that students need
support from knowledgeable academic counselors/advisors to engage in effective educational planning and decision making, and if this support is received, they will more likely persist to degree completion.

Moreover, if this support is delivered proactively to students, they might make more well thought out and accurate decisions about choosing a major. This might serve not only to promote student retention, but also reduce the probability of prolonged student indecisiveness and premature decision-making, which can also possibly decrease the changing of majors at later stages in the college experience. Student indecisiveness and late major changing might also result in a delayed progress toward graduation because student may need to complete additional courses to fulfill specific degree requirements for their newly chosen major. This might be one factor contributing to the extended length of time it now takes undergraduate students to complete their degree (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1994); for example, the number of students who take five or six years to graduate from college has doubled since the early 1980s (Kramer, 1993). It might be reasonable to suggest that proactive multicultural counseling can assist with earlier and more accurate major choices, and thereby decreasing college students’ average time to graduation.

*Students Utilization of Support Services and Multicultural Counseling/Advising*

One way in which universities can improve both the academic performance and retention of students is by increasing their utilization of campus support services, because research clearly suggests that there is a positive relationship between utilization of campus support services and persistence to graduation (Churchill & Iwai, 1981; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In particular, students who seek and receive academic
counseling have been found to improve both their academic performance and their academic self-efficacy by developing a greater sense of self-perceived control of academic outcomes, and develop higher self-expectations for future academic success (Smith, Walter, & Hoey, 1992). Higher levels of self-efficacy, in turn, have been found to correlate positively with college students’ academic performance and persistence; this is true for Hispanic students in particular (Solberg, O’Brien, Villareal, & Davis, 1993) and underrepresented students in general (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1987).

Unfortunately, research has also shown that college students under utilize academic support services (Friedlander, 1980; Walter & Smith, 1990), especially those students who are in most need of support (Knapp & Karabenick, 1988; Abrams & Jernigan, 1984). At-risk students, in particular, have trouble recognizing that they are experiencing academic difficulty and are often reluctant to seek help even if they do recognize their difficulty (Levin & Levin, 1991). These findings are especially disturbing when compared to other research, which reveals that academic support programs designed for underrepresented students exert a statistically significant effect on their retention and grades when they are utilized, especially if these services are utilized by students during their first year (Kulik, Kulik, & Schwalb, 1983).

The foregoing set of findings strongly suggests that institutions should deliver academic support intrusively by initiating contact with students and aggressively bringing support services to them, rather than offering services passively and hoping that students will come and take advantage of them on their own accord. Multicultural counselors/advisors are in the ideal position to intrusively connect students with other academic support personnel, who can provide students with timely assistance before their
academic performance and persistence are adversely affected by ineffective learning strategies.

Multicultural counselors are also in a position to promote student retention by connecting students to student development services and co-curricular programs. The importance of student involvement in campus life for student retention is documented by findings demonstrating that students who are more socially integrated or involved in campus life, and feel they are part of the campus community, are more likely to persist to graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Academic counselors/advisors are also well positioned to promote student persistence by educating students about the value of co-curricular participation and encouraging their involvement with student development services. Winston (1994) argues:

Developmental advising has the greatest impact through supporting and challenging students to take advantage of the multitude of learning opportunities outside of their formal classes and to use the human and programmatic resources designed to promote development of their talents and broaden their cultural awareness. Developmental advising has a multiplier effect that increases students’ involvement in institutional programs and services; this positively influences retention for the institution and increases the overall impact of the educational experience for students (p. 114).

Outside the Classroom contacts, Academic Advising, and Student Retention

The Education Commission of the States (1995), in a nation report, concluded that out of class contact with faculty members is one of its most essential attributes of good practice arguing that, “through such contact, students are able to see faculty members less as experts than as role models for ongoing learning” (p.8). This assertion is supported by a broad base of research, which demonstrates that student/faculty contact outside the classroom is strongly correlated with student retention (Bean, 1981; Pascarella 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini 1991, 2005).
Drawing on data generated by a longitudinal study of 200,000 students at 300 institutions of all types, Astin (1977) reports, “Student/faculty interactions have a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other variable and any student characteristic or institutional characteristic” (p. 223).

Similar to Astin’s quantitative findings, Noel (1978) argued:

It is increasingly apparent that the most important features of a “staying” environment relate to the instructional faculty. Students make judgments about their academic experience on the basis of such factors as quality of instruction, freedom to contact faculty for consultation, availability of faculty for consultation, and faculty involvement outside the classroom (pp. 86-97).

Tinto (1987) offers another observation: “instructions with low rates of student retention are those in which students generally report low rates of student-faculty contact. Conversely, institutions with high rates of retention are most frequently those which are marked by relatively high rates of such interactions” (p. 66).

Tinto (1975) also argues that out of class contact between faculty and students has particularly powerful effects on the persistence of students who are “withdrawal prone.” After conducting several interviews with high-risk students who overcame the odds and succeeded in college, Tinto found that, “in every case, the students cited one or two events, when someone on the faculty or staff had made personal contact with them outside the classroom. That’s what made the difference” (Tinto in Levitz, 1990). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) also found that the frequency of non-classroom contact between students and faculty/staff to discuss academic issues had its most positive influence on the persistence of students with low initial commitment to college, and students whose parents had relatively low levels of formal education.

It appears that student/faculty interactions outside the classroom, have been found
to have a direct effect on student retention that is independent of other potentially influential variables (e.g., students’ level of involvement with peers, prior academic preparation, or educational aspirations at college entry). Pascarella (1980) reviewed and synthesized a large number of studies investigating the relationship between student-faculty contact and educational outcomes and concluded the following:

The significant associations between student-faculty informal contact and educational outcomes are not merely the result of co-variation with individual differences in student entering characteristics or with college experiences in other areas, such as peer culture. Rather, various facets and quality of student informal contact with faculty may make a unique contribution to college impact. In turn this suggests the possibility that colleges and universities may be able to positively influence the extent and quality of student-faculty contact, and thereby faculty impact on students, in ways other than the kinds of students they enroll (pp. 564-565).

Colleges and universities might be able to positively influence the extent and quality of student-faculty contact through high quality academic counseling/advising delivered by faculty/staff through out-of-class interaction with students. Being that the direct empirical association between student retention and student-faculty contact outside the classroom, especially when such interaction involves discussion of students’ academic plans (Wilson, 1975; Terenzini, 1986), it is reasonable to suggest that high quality counseling/advising will influence student retention in general, and the retention of at-risk students in particular. Moreover, academic counseling/advising might be the institution’s only structure that ensures that students have personal, one-to-one contact with a faculty or staff member. The need to ensure such personal contact is supported by a national survey research conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which reveals a substantial decline in the percentage of undergraduates who agree with the statement, “there are professionals at my college whom I feel free to turn
to for advice on personal matters” (Boyer, 1987).

*Mentoring for undergraduate students, Academic Counseling/Advising, and Retention*

At many colleges and universities mentoring programs are on the rise (Haring, 1997), and mentoring is increasingly being viewed as a tool for promoting student retention (Walker & Taub, 2001), particularly the retention of first-year students (Johnson, 1989). Student mentoring has the potential to reduce students’ from feeling marginalized and can increase their sense of inclusion (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989), and can also provide an important sense of validation for first-generation students’ who might struggle with transition to college (Rendon, 1994).

Gardner (1981) argues the importance of student mentoring:

Students need mentors and facilitators. They need, in the words of Carl Rogers, authentic professional human beings who are worthy of emulation. They need models who exhibit professional behavior, a sense of commitment and purposefulness, and a sense of autonomy and integrity in a world that generates enormous stress. Students cannot be told how to do this; authenticity cannot be transmitted through lectures (p. 70).

Mentoring is valuable for all students, but it may be especially critical to the retention and success of underrepresented, first-generation, and minority college students who do not have college role modes at home. Tinto (1987) notes, “while role modeling seems to be effective in retention programs generally, it appears to be especially important among those programs concerned with disadvantaged minority students” (p. 161).

Additional research regarding mentoring programs indicates that it has a positive impact on the personal and professional development of young adults (Levinson, 1978). There is also a large body of research in higher education that suggests an empirical link between student mentoring and student retention (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Wallace
& Abel, 1997). For example, Miller, Neuner, and Glynn (1988) used an experimental research design in which students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group who received mentoring, or a control group who did not. It was found that students who received mentoring persisted at a higher rate than non-mentored students with similar pre-enrollment characteristics.

Although mentoring has a positive relationship with retention, one of the major short-comings for implementing mentoring programs is the lack of quality mentors available to sustain a strong mentoring program that reaches a significant number of students (Redmond, 1990). Walker and Taub (2001) reveals that network mentoring programs, in which multiple students are mentored by one college faculty or staff member, are comparable in effectiveness to traditional dyadic (1 to 1) mentoring relationships as measured in terms of student satisfaction with the quality of the mentoring relationship and the frequency of contact with their mentor. This finding suggests that traditional academic counseling/advising programs have the potential to also function as a mentoring program, because a ratio of multiple students to one counselor may also enable the advantages of mentoring to be realized. While counseling and mentoring have been traditionally deemed as distinctly different programs, even a cursory look at some of the criteria cited in the literature for effective mentors appear to be very compatible with the characteristics as qualities of effective counselors. For instance, Johnson (1989) identifies the following characteristics as qualities of effective mentors: (a) more mature than the mentee, (b) interpersonal skills, (c) willingness to commit time, and (d) knowledge of the campus. These qualities are also very consistent with characteristics of being an effective counselor/advisor.
Many students’ have reported that they value academic counselors/advisors who serve as mentors, who are accessible, approachable, and helpful in providing guidance that connects their present academic experience with their future life plans (Winston, Ender, & Miller, 1982; Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites, & Associates, 1984; Frost, 1991; Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). Given the similarity of desirable qualities cited for mentors and counselors/advisors, in conjunction with the research suggesting that mentoring may be effectively delivered by networking multiple mentees with one mentor, it appears as if the retention-promoting potential of mentoring programs may be achieved as effectively and efficiently through counseling/advising programs, particularly if counselors are well prepared and adequately rewarded for this role. Being that counseling/advising focuses on an issue that is central to the personal lives of students, the connection between their present collegiate experience with their future life plans, and is delivered by an experienced person who has already navigated a similar course, it appears that mentoring is an integral element of academic counseling/advising. Tracey and Sedlack (1987) found that African American students, in particular, on White campuses must have the encouragement of a strong support person to assist them in making a successful transition to college. As such, special counseling programs for African American students at PWIs should be viewed and pursued with the same enthusiasm for promoting student retention as mentoring programs.

Multicultural Counseling Programs for African American Students at PWIs

Research assessing the effects of multicultural counseling in particular on African American students’ academic performance and persistence is less expansive (Cheatham, Shelton, & Ray, 1987; Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001). In fact, despite studies that have
documented African American students’ use of these and similar services, research examining the association between use of such services and retention is sparse, especially with regard to minority students at PWI’s. Cheatham et al. (1987) found that African American students are three times more likely than White students to use multicultural counseling and other academic assistance programs. Fuertes and Gretchen (2001) reported that African American students tend to use formal academic assistance sources, like counseling, early in their college career and later in their college career, during their junior or senior year, seek more informal sources such as peer interactions for consultation.

The characteristics of students who use counseling services have been reported by Constantine, Juby, & Liang (2001) Fuertes and Gretchen (2001), Harley et al (2002). In general, these and similar studies have not reported the academic counseling patterns of African American students at PWIs. Moreover, the available literature still does not provide instructive indices of multicultural counseling program variables as important factors in African American students’ retention and graduation rates at PWIs. In order to identify factors that may influence whether an African American students graduates or does not graduate from college, a systematic examination of variables regarding the use of multicultural counseling services is vital. Institutional retention research traditionally concentrates on analyses of graduation rates, examination of persistence patterns, investigation of student attrition behaviors, analyses of historical trends and facts, and explanations of the psychosocial dynamics associated with retention (Tinto, 1993; IRP 2003). This study, however, will attempt to examine African American student degree completion with an emphasis on the influence of multicultural counseling. Researchers
and practitioners can still improve upon some of the already developed models and instruments to assess, predict, and enhance African American student retention by also studying multicultural counseling and its potential influences on the graduation status for African American students.

As indicated in the purpose of this study, this research will attempt to assess the long-term influences found for a cohort of African American students who were first-year students in 1999 and who were targeted clientele of the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) at a large PWI public university and graduated within six years. While in 1989, Cheatham and Trippi studied student characteristics and the features of a multicultural counseling program on the retention of African American first-year student at a PWI, the findings of this particular study, however, should seek to complement the Cheatham and Trippi (1989) study by focusing on multicultural counseling and its influence on the graduation status for African American students at a PWI. Again, two questions will be investigated: (a) For what purposes do African American undergraduate students use multicultural counseling services? (b) What influence does the use of multicultural counseling services have on African American undergraduate students’ graduation status?

CHAPTER THREE

Procedures

The general purpose of this study is to assess the influence of multicultural counseling use on the degree completion status found for a cohort of African American undergraduate students who were first-year students in 1999 and who were targeted
clientele of the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) at a large PWI public university. This chapter includes information regarding the study population, the database variables used, statistical procedures, and limitations.

**Methodology**

**Population**

Participants of this study were 205 (130=female, 75=male), African American baccalaureate degree-seeking first-year students admitted to a large predominantly White public university during the fall semester of 1999 who voluntarily made contact with a multicultural counselor. This represents 75% (205/273) of the African American undergraduate students admitted in the Fall semester of 1999. The 205 excludes African American students who were scholarship athletes and/or students enrolled in one of the special admittance programs, (i.e., the Comprehensive Studies Program CSP/EOP), and eleven other African American students who never made contact with MRC. Both the scholarship athlete and CSP/EOP students receive similar academic support services, and MRC services would merely provide duplicate services. As a result, these students (athletes and CSP/EOP) students were deselected from the MRC roster list.

**Database Variables**

Beginning in the fall of 1985, the University established a database containing detailed descriptive information on all contacts between students and counseling staff in the MRC. For each contact (i.e., in person, telephone, and/or email exchanges), counselors record the presented student concern. The primary pre-coded reasons/concerns for the contacts include (a) academic progress concerns (AP), (b) non-
specific conversations for the purposes of building and maintaining the counselor-student relationship (OV), (c) career and academic major choice concerns (CM). (d) part-time employment (EP), (e) financial issues (FI), (f) “negotiating the system” (NS) pertaining to counselor-student sessions initiated for the purpose of assisting the student in understanding the institutional culture, norms, and procedures (Cheatham et al., 1987), (g) personal issues (PI), (h) Student Organizations/Volunteering (SV), (i) Mid Semester Report (MR) and (j) scheduling appointments (SP). (See Appendix A: for a pre-coded list of college student concerns adapted from Jackson, Holt, Nelson, 2005).

The pre-coded counseling data were combined with student information extracted from the official university data base warehouse. As a control for potential salient non-counseling use variables, several additional student variables were also included in the analyses. The student independent variables included:

*Independent Variables*

The total number of contacts between the student and counselor (by recorded purpose of the contact) during the student’s college enrollment was the method of measurement used for the counseling contact variable. The counseling contact variable will also include multiple contacts (i.e., in person, telephone, and/or email exchanges) between students and counselors. This variable represents interval/ratio data.

The University’s Academic Admission Index score (see Appendix B) which incorporates: high school grade performance, measured as the average grade earned in all courses taken in high school and the verbal and quantitative scholastic aptitude, using the scores obtained by the student on the verbal and quantitative sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). This variable represents interval/ratio data.
Gender (0=male, 1=female) represents nominal data. 

Academic major (0=non science index college, 1=science index college) represents nominal data. All non science academic majors include students in Agricultural Sciences, Arts and Architecture, College of Business Administration, Communications, Education, Health and Human Development, Liberal Arts, and the Division of Undergraduate Studies. Science or engineering majors include students in the Colleges of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Engineering, College of Science, and the College of Information Science Technology. 

College grade performance/cumulative grade point average (cgpa) reflects grades earned in all college courses taken represents interval/ratio data. 

Dependent Variable

Student graduation time frame was captured in a binary representation (0) = indicating whether the student had completed a baccalaureate degree program within 6 academic years following matriculation and (1) = did not graduate within 6 academic years. Students who did not graduate in six years include students who may have withdrawn, departed, or transferred to another institution and/or students who may have required more than six years to graduate. A limitation of this variable does not allow the researcher to determine if a student has withdrawn, departed, or transferred. As a result, this limitation prevents the researcher from identifying or determining why a student may have not graduated within six years in the interpretation of the findings.

Basis for Statistical Procedures

Data analysis was completed using a combination of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics include measures of central tendency (mean),
measures of variability (standard deviation, range, relative frequency) and graphics (bar
and pie charts). Chi square, zero order correlations and logistic regression were
inferential statistics used in the data analysis plan. Justification for the use of inferential
statistics is based on the argument by Huck (pp. 107 -110, 2005) and Smithson ( pp. 370
– 372, 2000). Both authors argue that in many social science studies an investigator may
use inferential statistics with caution even though random sampling of the study
participants was not involved. Huck contends that if one believes the accessible
population understudy is similar to an inaccessible population (i.e., the participants were
not directly contacted to be a targeted population for this study) the use of inferential
statistics may be justified. Smithson suggests that the researcher may use inferential
statistics whenever the researcher is “satisfied that we can model a phenomenon via a
statistical model, and we are sufficiently careful in specifying what inferences can and
cannot be made” (p. 370).

Chi square results were used to examine the graduation timeframe (0=graduated
within six years or 1=did not graduate within six years) by gender (0=male, 1=female)
and by students’ academic college (i.e., 0 = non science colleges and 1 = science
colleges). Bar chart and pie graph data analysis procedures were used for representing
differences in counseling use over six undergraduate years of college (1999-2005) and for
illustrating students’ grade point averages and type of counseling contact made with the
MRC office personnel.

A binary logistic regression was used for assessing the relationship between the
primary independent variable, frequency of use of counseling during the six
undergraduate years and college graduation status from the institution while
simultaneously controlling for the influence of other variables. In this study the other independent variables entered in the analysis included indicators of academic performance, gender and major.

Logistic regression is a technique used to assess the contribution of the various independent variables to the accuracy of a likelihood, or probability, estimate that a given observation will have a value of 1 on the dependent measure (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Logistic regression provides a means to avoid attempting to fit a linear function to a bimodal distribution. Several reviews of college attrition research have recommended the use of logistic regression when using binary measures of college student persistence or graduation as the dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Afifi, Clark, & May, 2004; Tinto, 1993). In such situations logistic regression has been judged as more appropriate to both least squares regression (Stocks, Davis, & Koch, 1995; Kachigan, 1991) and discriminant analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Munro, 2004; Field, 2005) as a technique for the analysis of a binary response variable.

As is common in descriptive correlational field studies, mean scores and standard deviation values for interval/ratio variables were analyzed as they relate to the p<.05 or p<.01 statistical significance levels. Within the logistic regression analysis, the following five basic assumptions/requirements were examined: (1) the independent variables are interval/ratio or dichotomous “dummy coded,” (2) the expected value of the error term is zero (0), (3) there is no statistically significant autocorrelation, (4) there is no correlation between the size of the error term and the independent variables, and (5) there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables. Additionally the researcher examined the interval/ratio independent variables for normality (examination of skewness
values and boxplots). The skewness value for the number of contacts with MRC personnel was severely negatively skewed (per guidelines of Field, 2005) and as evidenced by the boxplots indicating the presence of extreme outliers. The attempt to “normalize” the data for this variable using log transformations was not successful. Therefore the investigator decided to eliminate from further analysis nine cases which were deemed extreme outliers for that variable. Prior to elimination of the nine cases the researcher examined the data to further understand potential reasons for the extremely high values for the nine people on the variable number of contacts with MRC personnel. Plausible explanations were identified whereupon it was decided to remove the nine cases from the data analysis for this study.

**Database Limitations**

As mentioned in the “database variables” section, the University’s Academic Admission Index score pre-determines if a student is admitted into a non-science or science college. It is possible that some students may switch from a science college to a non-science college prior to graduation. Additional research is needed to be able to track if students actually graduate from the pre-determined college that they start out in. The current approach to determining the number of contacts from the database provides limited details regarding the length of the contact and the severity of the issue or reason for the contact. Thus this variable really only is a measure of the number of contacts and in no way reflects the issue or criticality of the issue addressed in a contact.
CHAPTER FOUR
Findings

Background

This chapter describes results of the empirical analyses regarding the influences of specialized multicultural academic counseling on African American undergraduate students' graduation status at a predominantly white university. The chapter is comprised of six sections. Sections one and two answer research question one. Sections three through five summarize results for research question two. The chapter concludes with section six which summarizes results of the logistic regression analysis regarding the influences of selected factors on 196 African American students’ timeframe to graduation.

Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with the MRC Personnel among African American students who graduated within the six year timeframe

As previously indicated in Chapter 3, the participants of this study were 205 (130=female, 75=male), or 75% of all African American baccalaureate degree-seeking first-year students admitted to a large predominantly White public university during the fall semester of 1999 who made contact with the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC). On average, these students made 4.5 visits and/or contacts with the MRC. Of the 205 students, 9 students had unusually high amounts of visits and/or contacts with the MRC. For example, one female student had a total of 114 academic progress/issues (AP) visits. Two other male students combined for 153 visits related to student organizations/volunteering (SV). In addition, there was another female student who made 70 total contacts with the office and 31% of those visits were for financial issues (FI). There was also one female student who made 42 contacts with the MRC and 88%
of those visits were for academic progress/issues (AP). Another male student made 49 contacts and 69% of those contacts were for academic progress/issues (AP). Three additional female students combined for 136 contacts and 75% of those visits were general discussion/office visits (OV). Being that these 9 students were extreme outliers in the logistic regression, they were subsequently removed from the original 205 (n=196) students. The commonalities among these 9 students were that they all had extremely high contacts with the MRC and all 9 graduated from the University.

The two questions for this study were the following: (a) For what purposes do African American undergraduate students use multicultural counseling services? (b) What influence does the use of multicultural counseling services have on African American undergraduate students’ graduation status? For the first question, the results are answered by the data summarized in Figures 1. The complete list of codes for consultation contacts appears in Appendix A. There were several most frequent reasons why students made contact with a counselor. As Figure 1 indicates, 11.6% of all the students in the study make contact with the MRC personnel for financial issues (FI). Roughly 19.6% of the students in this study seek out counseling for academic progress/issues (AP). Only 1% of the students make contact for choice of major/career development (CM) and employment (EP) respectively. Seven percent of the students make contact regarding personal issues (PI). More than 9% of the students make contact with the office for an initial intake interview (II). About 31% of the students in this study seek out a counselor for an office visit or general discussion visit (OV). A little more than 18% of the students seeking counseling needed to schedule an appointment (SP) with a counselor because a counselor may not have been readily available at the time of
the students’ initial visit to the office or the student may have wanted to schedule an appointment with a counselor that best fit into the students’ individual schedule.

Figure 1. Most frequent reasons for contact with Multicultural Resource Center personnel.

Cases = 196
Most Frequent Reasons for Contact with the MRC Personnel among African American Students Admitted into Science Colleges vs. Non-Sciences Colleges

Research has shown that the persistence and graduation rates of African American students majoring in science related fields were below the overall persistence and graduation rates for these same students in all other fields (American Council on Education, 2006). The purpose of this section is to examine the differences in the degree completion of African American students majoring in science fields compared to African American students in non-science fields and how contact with the Multicultural Resource Center personnel might have influenced their graduation status.

Figure 2 shows that 76% of the total African American student population enrolled in a non-science college made contact with the MRC personnel and 25% of the total student population enrolled in a science major made contact with the office. Very clearly, science majors were less likely to make contact with MRC personnel compared to non-science majors.
Information in Figure 3 illustrates the distribution for the graduation timeframe of the study participants across the science and non-science colleges. For example, 59% of the students in non-science index colleges who made contact with MRC personnel graduated in six years or less compared to 41% of those who required more than six years. Additionally, 54% of the students in science index colleges graduated in six years or less while 46% required more than six years to graduate. Figure 3 reveals that out of all the science and non-science students who made contact with a MRC personnel, a higher percentage of those students graduated within six years or less as compared to those students in these same majors who required more than six years. The most consistent finding (Figure 4) for students in science colleges and students in non-science
colleges was their use of the Multicultural Resource Center counseling services for the purposes/reasons of academic progress/issues (AP), financial issues (FI), mid-semester report (MR), and general discussion/office visits (OV). For example, of the students in science colleges and non science colleges who made contact with the MRC and graduated in six years, 9% of the students in science colleges made contact for financial issues while 13% of the students in non science colleges made contact for financial issues. Thirty three percent of the students in science colleges made contact for general discussion/office visits, while 30% of the students in non science colleges made general discussion/office visits.

![Figure 3. Time to graduation by college.](image)

Cases = 196
Figure 4. Comparison of most frequent reasons for contact with Multicultural Resource Center personnel by college type.

Cases = 196
Use of counseling services during the first semester of college for the purposes of mid semester reporting was found to be common for both students in science and non science colleges. The mid semester report (MR) is a policy (47-70) developed by the University’s Registrars Office to inform beginning students-of-color when the level of their academic performance is such that they are in danger of receiving failing grades in certain courses. Faculty members inform the University’s Registrar Office of beginning students in their course who, at mid-semester time, are performing at a level below that of a “C” and, in turn, MRC counselors are then provided a copy of this list and are encouraged to make contact with these students. Thirteen percent of the students in non science colleges received counseling for mid-semester low grades or low test scores, while only 7% of the students in science colleges received counseling for mid-semester reporting for low grades or low test scores. Twenty five percent of the students in science colleges made contact with a counselor for academic progress related issues, while 17% of the students in non science colleges made contact with a counselor for academic progress related issues. This suggests that students in science colleges might be a little more concerned about their academic progress than students in non science colleges.

Prior research has concluded that it is important for African American students to achieve in the science colleges for two reasons. First, national reports indicate that educational pipelines feeding into the science fields show declines for African American students at a time when society is marked by advancing technology and an increasing need for workers with backgrounds in science (American Council on Education, 2006; Oakes, 1990). One way to counter such declines is for African American students to
achieve parity in their share of science degrees with respect to the population base. Secondly, occupational and economic rewards are not just a function of years of schooling, but the major fields that students pursue. One way for African American students to close occupational and earning gaps is to make gains in key fields (i.e., science based disciplines) where they have been underrepresented (Oakes, 1990). The findings in this section illustrate, that African American students’ in science colleges sought multicultural counseling for six most frequent reasons, including academic progress concerns, and 54% of these students graduated within six years or less.

Comparisons of Most Frequent reasons for Contact with a Multicultural Counselor by Graduation Timeframe

For the second research question, the researcher asked—*What influence does the use of multicultural counseling services have on African American undergraduate students’ graduation status?* Figure 5 illustrates the comparison of the most frequent reasons for contact with the Multicultural Resource Center personnel by graduation timeframe. For the reasons (i.e., Academic Progress/Issues (AP), Financial Issues (FI), Intake Interview (II), Mid-Semester Reporting (MR), and General Office Visits/Discussions (OV), & Scheduling Appointments (SP)) within each graduation timeframe group, figure 5 shows what percent fit into these reasons for contact and graduated in six years or less compared to students who did not graduate within six years or less and made contact with the MRC personnel for the same reason. Figure 5 indicate, that there were no significant differences in the percentages among the students who graduated after seeking counseling for academic progress/issues (AP), 21% graduated within the six year timeframe and 22% did not. About 15% of the students in
the study made contact with the MRC personnel for financial issues (FI) and did not graduate while 12% of the students with financial issues graduated within the six year timeframe. Nearly 11% of the students made contact with the office for an initial intake interview (II) and graduated within six years, while 6% of the students who can in for the initial intake interview did not graduate within six years. For students seeking counseling for mid-semester reporting (MR) 12% required more than six year to graduate and 9% graduated within six years or less. Roughly 32% of the students in this study seek out a counselor for an office visit or general discussion visit (OV) and graduated within six years or less while 26% of the students with these types of visits did not. About 15% of the students seek to schedule appointments (SP) with a counselor graduated in six years while 19% did not.

In summary, students who sought multicultural counseling for these six primary reasons graduated at various timeframes. These results reveal that students who sought counseling for intake interviews and general office visit discussions were more likely to graduate in six years or less, while students who sought counseling for financial issues were less likely to graduate within six years.
An additional sub-question emerged from the findings and it examined: *What is the association between the college in which a student was enrolled (science college vs. non science college) and their graduation timeframe?* For example, about 54.2% of the students enrolled in a science college graduated within six years or less, while 45.8% of the students enrolled in science colleges did not graduate within six years (Table I).
Table I. Association of graduation timeframe by college. (n =196)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe to Graduation</th>
<th>Non Science College</th>
<th>Science College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than Six Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within college</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Years or Less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within college</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Whether enrolled in a college considered a science-oriented college or not (used or did not use the Science Index for admission) did not significantly influence whether a student graduated within the six year timeframe (Chi square = .42, p = .61). Although not statistically significant (p = .614), in actual percentage there is a slightly greater proportion of African American students in non-science colleges (59.5%) graduating in six years or less as compared to African American students in science colleges (54.2%).

Graduation Timeframe among African American Male and Female Students Who Sought Counseling and Graduated Within 6 Years or did not Graduate Within 6 Years or Less.

Figure 6 present the results of the total distribution of African American male and female students who sought multicultural counseling. Sixty three percent were female students and 37% were male students.
Figure 6. Distribution of participants by gender.

Cases = 196

Figure 7 depicts the graduation timeframe by gender. Sixty two percent of the total female student population who made contact with the office graduated within a 6 year period and 52% of the total male student population who made contact with the office graduated within a 6 year period. Thirty eight percent of the total female population did not graduate within six years and 48% of the male students did not graduate within six years. The phi coefficient = (.23) is not significant at the p<.05 or p<.01 statistical significance levels. As a result, the study suggests that there is no relationship statistically between gender and having graduated within 6 years. Both male
and female students who made contact with the MRC graduated at similar rates within a 6 year period. Although gender had no statistical significance \( \phi \) coefficient \( = (.23) \) between male and female students who made contact with a counselor and graduated within six years or less, prior research concludes that degree completion rates for female students are consistently higher than their male counterparts (Horn & Berger, 2004).

![Figure 7. Time to graduation by gender.](image)

As indicated gender had no significant influence with time to graduation (Chi square \( = 1.78, p = .23 \)). It is however interesting to note that examining the descriptive statistics in Table II reveals that 62% of the females graduated in six years or less as contrasted to 52% of the males graduating in six year or less.
Table II. Association of graduation timeframe by gender. (n =196)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe to Graduation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than Six Years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within timeframe</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Years or Less</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within timeframe</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 1.784, df = 1, p = .231. Phi coefficient = .095, p =.182.

Figure 8 highlights the overall time to graduation from fall semester 1999 of all the African American students who made contact with a counselor and graduated within a six year timeframe. Fifty eight percent of all African American students in this study who made contact with the office graduated within six years or less, while 42% did not graduate within six years.
Final Grade Point Average (GPA) by Gender and College at Graduation

Figure 9 shows the final grade point averages of both male and female students in science and non-science colleges who made contact with a counselor and graduated within six years or less. For example, female students who made contact with a counselor and enrolled in a science college, their final average GPA at graduation was 2.785 compared similarly to female students in non-science colleges whose final average GPA’s were 2.79. Male students, who made contact with a counselor and enrolled in a
science college, final average GPA at graduation was 2.725 and was also closely matched by male students in non-science colleges whose final average GPA’s were 2.531.

Figure 9. Final GPA by gender by college.
Figure 9.1 reveal the GPA trends of all African American students who had contact with a Multicultural Counselor and graduated within six-years or less.

The data suggests that students who made contact with a counselor in 1999 also started out with high GPA’s in their first year. Figure 9.1 also illustrates that the GPA trend for this population deceases slightly over time and at the time of graduation (2005) the GPA trend slightly increases again. This finding corresponds with results provided by other studies which also suggest that African American student attrition is most critical during the first year of college (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Rendón, Jaloma, and Nora, 2000).

Logistic Regression Summary Results: The Influence of Selected Factors on Time Frame to Graduation
Binary logistic regression results (Table III) indicate there is one independent variable (GPA) which has a statistically significant influence on whether a student does or does not graduate within six years after entering college. More specifically the results summarized in logistic regression models 3 and 4 in Table III indicate that higher GPA is more likely to be associated with graduating within six years of entering college (Block Chi square values = 45.43, p <.001). Examination of the Exp (b) values for GPA in models 3 and 4 indicate that those with higher GPA values were about six times more likely to graduate within six years after starting college (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The classification results indicate when GPA is in the logistic regression equation model approximately 70% - 71% of the cases were correctly classified.

The following represents a description of the influence of the remaining variables in the sequential binary logistic regression. Sequential logistic regression was used to examine the collective influence of entering independent variables in a specified sequence (order). This enabled the researcher to examine the influence of the specific variable and also the overall cumulative influence of previous variables.

The first group of variables entered was gender and college in which the person entered. College entered was “dummy” coded to reflect whether the person entered a college in which the university used or did not use a science index to inform the admission decision. Results from model one (Table III) also reveal that gender or college entered had no influence (Block Chi square = 1.93, p =.38) on whether the person graduated or did not graduate within six years after entering college. Although gender consistently shows no statistical significance in this study, female students, on average, have been found to graduate at higher levels than male students (Horn & Berger, 2004).
Table III. Summary of sequential binary logistic regression results with time to graduation as the dependent variable (0 = more than six years to graduation and 1 = within six years to graduation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>0 = Female</td>
<td>.38 (.31)</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.35 (.31)</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.17 (.35)</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.14 (.35)</td>
<td>1.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 = Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 = Non Sci.</td>
<td>-.13 (.34)</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>-.12 (.34)</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>-.26 (.45)</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.25 (.38)</td>
<td>.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 = Science</td>
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<td>Contacts</td>
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<td>GPA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.86 (.33)**</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>1.89 (.34)**</td>
<td>6.64</td>
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<td>-.03 (.06)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chi square p</td>
<td>1.93 (p =.38)</td>
<td>.28 (p=.59)</td>
<td>45.43 (p &lt;.001)</td>
<td>.30 (p=.58)</td>
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<td>47.95</td>
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<td>Nagelkerke $R^2$</td>
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<td>% Correctly</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
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** p < .01
The second group of variables entered was number of visits (contacts) to the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC). Contacts with the MRC may be either by personal visit, e-mail or telephone. In this analysis the number of visits is really a raw count of number of contacts, and there is no attempt to analyze the purpose of the visit/contact. Results from model two (Table III) reveal the number of visits/contacts with the MRC (Block Chi square = .28, p=.59) on whether the person graduated or did not graduate within six years after entering college. The results of these findings are that frequency of visits/contacts with the MRC personnel had no statistical influence on degree completion.

An examination of the influence of number of semesters enrolled on time to graduation was also investigated. The results of model 4 (Chi square = .30, p = .58) indicate that number of semesters had no statistical influence on whether the person graduated within the six year time frame after entering college. It is important to remember that number of semesters does not include information regarding the credit load of the student during the semester in which enrolled.

CHAPTER FIVE

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the purpose of the study, procedures, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Purpose and Summary of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to assess the influences of multicultural counseling found for a cohort of African American students who were first-year students in 1999 and who were targeted students of the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) at a
large public PWI and their degree completion status. The study focused on two major research questions: (a) For what purposes do African American undergraduate students use multicultural counseling services? (b) What influence does the use of multicultural counseling services have on African American undergraduate students’ graduation status?

Data and Procedures

The population for this study consisted of 205 (130=female, 75=male), or 75% of all African American baccalaureate degree-seeking first-year students admitted to a large predominantly White public university during the fall semester of 1999 who had contact with a multicultural counselor. Of the 205 students, 9 students had unusually high amounts of visits and/or contacts with the MRC. Being that these 9 students were extreme outliers in the logistic regression, they were subsequently removed from the original 205 (n=196) students.

The primary pre-coded counseling variable levels include (a) academic progress concerns (AP), (b) non-specific conversations for the purposes of building and maintaining the counselor-student relationship (OV), (c) career and academic major choice concerns (CM). (d) part-time employment (EP), (e) financial issues (FI), (f) “negotiating the system” (NS) pertaining to counselor-student sessions initiated for the purpose of assisting the student in understanding the institutional culture, norms, and procedures (Cheatham et al., 1987), (g) personal issues (PI), (h) Student Organizations/Volunteering (SV), (i) Mid Semester Report (MR) and (j) scheduling appointments (SP) (See Appendix A for all other pre-coded variables).

The pre-coded counseling data were combined with student information extracted
from the official university data base warehouse. As a control for potential salient non-counseling use variables, several additional student variables were also included in the analyses. The student independent variables included:

*Independent Variables*

The total number of contacts between the student and counselor (by recorded purpose of the contact) during the student’s college enrollment was the method of measurement used for the counseling contact variable. This variable represents interval/ratio data.

The University’s Academic Admission Index score (see Appendix B) which incorporates: high school grade performance, measured as the average grade earned in all courses taken in high school and the verbal and quantitative scholastic aptitude, using the scores obtained by the student on the verbal and quantitative sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). This variable represents interval/ratio data used for obtaining the Chi-square results and Phi coefficient results.

*Gender* (0=male, 1=female) represents nominal data.

*Academic major* (0=non science index college, 1=science index college) represents nominal data. All non science academic majors include students in Agricultural Sciences, Arts and Architecture, College of Business Administration, Communications, Education, Health and Human Development, Liberal Arts, and the Division of Undergraduate Studies. Science or engineering majors include students in the Colleges of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Engineering, College of Science, and the College of Information Science Technology.
College grade performance/cumulative grade point average (cgpa) reflects grades earned in all college courses taken represents interval/ratio data.

**Dependent Variable**

Student graduation time frame was captured in a binary representation (0) = indicating whether the student had completed a baccalaureate degree program within 6 academic years following matriculation and (1) = did not graduate within 6 academic years. Students who did not graduate in six years include students who may have withdrawn, departed, or transferred to another institution and/or students who may have required more than six years to graduate. A limitation of this study does not allow the researcher to determine if a student has withdrawn, departed, or transferred. As a result, this limitation prevents the researcher from identifying or determining if and why a student may have not graduated within six years in the interpretation of the findings. Students who actually graduated within six years or less are identified. As a result, all other students who did not graduate within the six year timeframe are classified together as “did not graduate” from this institution at the time of this study.

Chi square results were used to exam the descriptive statistics of graduation timeframes by gender (0=male, 1=female) and by students’ academic college (i.e., 0 = non science colleges and 1 = science colleges). A binary logistic regression was used for assessing the relationship between use of counseling during each of the six undergraduate years and college graduation from the institution. As is common in correlation field studies, mean scores and standard deviation scores for interval ratio variables were analyzed as they relate to the p<.05 or p<.01 statistical significance levels. Within the logistic regression analysis, the following five assumptions were examined for accuracy:
(1) the independent variables are interval/ratio or dichotomous “dummy coded,” (2) the expected value of the error term is zero (0), (3) there is no significant autocorrelation, (4) there is no correlation between the size of the error term and the independent variables, and (5) there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables.

Discussion of Findings:

Research has shown that the effects of counseling on the scholastic achievement of some college students may be mediated by various types of student-counselor contacts and/or interactions (Cheatham & Trippi, 1989; Pinto & Feigenbaum, 1974; Tyler, 1969). Conceptually, counseling is critical to the success of some students, but it could be that it hasn’t been found to have consistent effects because of various missing elements such as the primary reasons why some students’ choose to seek counseling. The conclusions drawn from the studies noted above offers insight for this current study. The findings of this current study attempt to address some of the missing elements of counseling by identifying specific reasons why African American students seek to utilize multicultural counseling services and how multicultural counseling use might influence the graduation status of this population.

The results of this study reveal that 75% of the entire African American student population at this University utilized the Multicultural Resource Center’s counseling services during the time period of 1999 – 2005 and 58% of these students graduated within six years or less. African American students sought multicultural counseling for five most frequent reasons: academic progress, financial issues, intake interviews, mid-semester reporting, and general office visit discussions. The results of this study confirm the previous conclusions that some African American students on predominately White
Campuses see multicultural counseling programs as a vital resource in assisting them with various concerns while in college (Constantine, Juby, & Liang, 2001; Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001; Harley, et al, 2002). Furthermore, the study suggests that the influence of multicultural counseling might partially complement some of the recent theoretical frameworks designed to explain, describe or predict student persistence, attrition and retention for African American students by including counseling as a vital component in understanding student departure. Some of the more recent frameworks or models include: (1) sociological perspectives that focus on the influence of various social forces on college student departure or withdrawal (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005). (2) Organizational perspectives that focus on the influence of organizational characteristics and processes on college student departure or withdrawal (Braxton and Lee, 2005). (3) Economic perspectives that focus on the influence of cost/benefit analysis on college student decisions to persist or to depart (Bean and Eaton, 2000; Tillman, Sr. 2002). (4) Psychological perspectives that focus on the influence of psychological characteristics and processes on college student departure (Braxton and Lien, 2000). For example, researches have found that sociological perspectives include developing strong programming and positive aspects of student learning and development to help students to fit in with others at the institution (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005). Braxton and Hirschy (2005), highlight housing arrangements, placement in sets of classes with the same students, and special academic, athletic, and interest groups as activities that can aid in developing a social attachment to the institution. Organizational perspectives identify institutional fit as a sense of students fitting in with others at a college and at the same time developing a set of attitudes related to satisfaction with being a student, feeling a
sense of self-efficacy as a student, knowing the value of education, and feeling stress as a
student (Braxton and Lee, 2005). Organizational perspectives suggest that student
services affecting retention and graduation rates should seek to deliver services in such a
way that students can develop a positive attitude toward the institution and, most
importantly, toward the continued enrollment and degree completion (Bean, 2005).

Psychological perspectives include theories of self-efficacy and students attempts to
avoid excess and approach academic activities (learning to use academic libraries and
computer, disciplined study habits, informed note-taking, using math or writing
workshops) that can provide skills that reduce stress and increase a sense of self-efficacy
and result in a positive self-image and positive attitude toward the institution (Braxton
and Lien, 2000; Bean, 2005). The Economic perspectives include the direct costs
associated with education (tuition, room and board, books) and how many students leave
college due to money problems (Bean and Eaton, 2000; Tillman, Sr. 2002). The
commonality of these four perspectives is that they all failed to examine multicultural
counseling as a potential useful service to improve students’ experiences in college that
may lead to degree completion. The results of this current study show that some African
American students seek multicultural counseling for personal issues (7%). Although
psychological concerns are not examined in this study, some students who seek
multicultural counseling for personal or other concerns and may express a need for
psychological counseling can be referred to Counseling and Psychological Services if
necessary (see Appendix A) by a multicultural counselor. African American students
who find comfort in the relationship with a multicultural counselor (Cheatham & Trippi,
1989) may be more willing, at first, to reveal personal and/or psychological concerns
with a multicultural counselor rather than a psychological counselor. This referral by a multicultural counselor to a psychological counselor can attempt to complement psychological counseling and support African American students who may need to address some of the concerns highlighted in the psychological perspective.

Similarly for African American students in this study who seek multicultural counseling for financial issues (11.6%), a multicultural counselor can serve as a resource for students addressing the economic perspectives. Also found in this current study, African American students can seek multicultural counseling for social issues, negotiating the system concerns, and for student organization information (see Appendix A) that might address the sociological and organizational perspectives. As previously indicated, these four perspectives were designed to describe or predict reasons for student persistence and student departure (Bean, 2005), multicultural counseling attempts to move these four perspectives a step further by attempting to provide counseling services and mediation for African American students who might experience these issues. Thus, the assessment and contribution of multicultural counseling programs should be based not only on how these four perspectives (psychological, economic, sociological, and organizational) are supposed to be facilitated, but on whether, in providing these services, multicultural counselors influence positive gains in these four perspective areas for African American students as it relates to degree completion.

Supporting the earlier findings of the comparisons of the most frequent reasons for contact with the Multicultural Resource Center personnel by graduation timeframe, this study found that African American students are more likely to graduate within six years when they initiate counseling contact for academic concerns and general office
visits and less likely to graduate within six years when making contact with a counselor for financial issues. The overall positive relationship between students use of counseling for academic progress (19.6%) related issues points out the need for the counseling staff to target this cohort of African American students to provide systematic, focused academic counseling related interventions. Such interventions could include, but be limited to, counselors meeting with students to recognize their academic abilities and capabilities, accessing students to learning resources such as tutoring and study skills, and guiding students with informed academic choices. Academic and social integration are key to Tinto’s (1975, 1993) modeling of the departure process. For the students in this study who were less likely to graduate when making a contact with a counselor for financial issues, points to the conclusions of other studies which confirm that many students who decide to leave college tend to blame their departure on money problems (Bean, 2005). Thus, multicultural counseling for financial issues may be limited due to the lack of financial aid (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini, 2004) readily available for lower income students who attend higher priced institutions.

The finding that students make less use of counseling for choice of major/career development and employment related issues may well be an artifact of institutional policy regarding the point at which an academic major must be declared at the end of their third semester in college. At the institution where this study was conducted, it is probable that the 19.6% of the African American students that utilized the MRC for academic issues also see their academic adviser for such concerns until they recognize the greater availability of the MRC counselor and until the boundaries between academic and other concerns overlap and the student finds they may be best served in a “one-stop” academic
counseling office. Although students can opt to use both their academic advisor and a multicultural counselor, the strength and importance of this multicultural counseling unit is that it complements the offices designed to provide psychological, career, and other more narrowly focused services (see Appendix A for referral offices). Moreover, it is likely that at work here is what Bean (2005) has noted as students interacting with the institution and the external environment for academics, social factors, psychological processes, and key attitudes that increase the utility of support services for minority student retention. The need for multicultural counseling or advising for choice of major/career development and employment related issues is highlighted by prior research findings which indicate that three of every four students are uncertain or tentative about their career choice upon entering college (Titley & Titley, 1980; Frost, 1991). Thus, effective multicultural counseling can potentially exert an appreciable impact on student degree completion through its influence on students’ educational and career planning and academic major decision making.

Of importance is the finding that counselors needed to initiate contact to schedule appointments for 34% of the total African American student population in this study. Subsequently critical is the observation that 19% of these students did not graduate within six years than would be predicted by the admission index control variables (high school grade point average, SAT: see Appendix B). Of this 19%, it is possible that some of these students were also contacted for mid-semester reporting and as a result were less likely to graduate. For example, this study also revealed that 12% of the students who needed to be contacted by a counselor for mid-semester reporting did not graduate within six years or less. Stated otherwise, students who need to be prodded to use counseling
are less likely to graduate than those of similar ability and who are responsive (i.e., come voluntarily to the MRC). This finding confirms, over time, the earlier findings (Herr, 1985; Tierney, 1992; Braxton, 2000) of a negative relationship between frequent counselor-initiated counseling contacts and college completion. Often times, students who need to be prodded to use counseling are struggling academically and at the time when they finally utilize counseling it might be too late. As a result, the outcome of a negative relationship between frequent counselor-initiated counseling contacts and degree completion is apparent.

The positive relationship between use of counseling for general office visit discussions and a student graduating within six years was the most consistent finding. The trend that those students seeking to meet with a counselor for general office visit discussions were more likely to graduate was found in this study. This study also contributes to student development educators’ understanding of the most frequent reasons why African American students seek multicultural counseling, and to the design and administration of these types of programs. The findings of this study which show that African American students are seeking multicultural counseling for academic progress concerns and general office visit discussions conforms to the conclusions of prior research (Constantine, Juby, & Liang, 2001; Fuertes and Gretchen, 2001; Harley et al, 2002; Cheatham & Trippi, 1989) that African American students might perceive multicultural counseling as a useful campus resource.

The results of this study also revealed a greater incidence of contacts between counselors and African American students enrolled in non-science colleges (75.5%). This suggests that strong and articulated relationships between African American students in
non-science majors and multicultural counselors are critical. When examining the results of Table I of this study, there were a total of 88 of 148 non-science students seeking multicultural counseling compared to only 26 of 48 science students seeking counseling resulting in a greater number of contacts from non-science students and similar degree completion results between non-science and science majors. As indicated in chapter 4, although not statistically significant (Chi square = .417, p = .614), in actual percentage there is a slightly greater proportion of African American students, who made contact with a multicultural counselor, in non-science colleges (59.5%) graduating in six years or less as compared to African American students in science colleges (54.2%). This finding, however, also suggests that for African American students who were enrolled in a science college, six year graduation status was no different from the six year graduation status of African American students enrolled in non-science colleges. This assertion is supported by a broad base of research, which demonstrates that student/staff contact outside the classroom is strongly correlated with retention and degree completion (Bean, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For students enrolled in science colleges, a contrast of lower contact frequency (24.5%) is likely associated with another institutional artifact. That is, in most science majors, students must meet certain major prerequisites prior to declaring oneself a science major at the end of the third semester of college. As a result, many of the science students might seek more frequent services from a college academic advisor instead of a multicultural counselor.

Although gender had no significant influence on time to graduation (Chi square = 1.78, p = .23), it is however interesting to note that 62% of the females who had contact with a counselor graduated within six years or less as contrasted to 52% of the males
graduating within six years or less. Both of these six year graduation rates are higher than the national average for African American students. The most recent graduation rates for this population indicated that 44.7 percent of African American women graduate from their first institution in six years, compared to 34.2 percent of African American men (Horn & Berger, 2004). Consistent here is the fact that, in this study as compared to the national average, the female graduation rate was still 10% higher than their male counterparts. At this same institution, the six-year graduation rate for all African American students is 65.9% which is also well above the national average.

Both African American male and female students in this study sought assistance for five primary concerns: academic progress issues, financial issues, intake interview, mid-semester report, general office visit discussions, and scheduling appointments. Among these concerns, financial issues and mid semester reporting are distinct in that they carry more immediate consequences for the student and hence, require concrete and relatively short term action. Because African American students can meet with multicultural counselors regarding these two matters, counseling relationships can be reinforced and stabilized. If African American students are satisfied with the services they receive from a multicultural counselor, the likelihood of them frequently utilizing this service is evident by the total number of contacts found in this study (75%).

Although unanimity among researchers is lacking (Herr, 1985; Tierney, 1992; Bean and Eaton, 2000), this notion is supported by those authors who argue that supplementing traditional counseling interventions with active problem-solving strategies best meets the expectations of African American students (Creamer & Scott, 2000; Constantine, Juby, & Liang, 2001; Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001; Walker & Taub, 2001; Harley, et al, 2002).
Multicultural counseling attempts to provide active problem-solving strategies by affording students the opportunity to seek counseling for a variety of different reasons found in this current study. It should be noted, however, that this university environment intentionally provides considerable overlap or redundancy (Horn & Berger, 2004; Walker & Taub, 2001) in counseling facilities. This study does not identify or know who among those in the targeted group sought and received counseling elsewhere.

The logistic regression results of this study, regarding grade point average (GPA), suggest that African American students with a high GPA were six times more likely to graduate within each category of contacts (controlling for contacts). For example, among those students who had 4 contacts, those students with a high GPA were more likely to graduate. Similarly, among those students with 2 contacts, those students with a high GPA were more likely to graduate within six years or less [Exp (b) 6.40]. In an earlier study, Tyler (1969) also concluded that counseling has its greatest effects on academic achievement when moderate to high performing students demonstrate a willingness to participate in counseling.

Another logistic regression result of this study, however, also revealed that the number of contacts alone [Exp (b) 1.02] had no influence on graduation. Based on this logistic regression finding, multicultural counseling needs to be further examined systemically and systematically, perhaps from a qualitative perspective, to determine positive outcomes of degree completion for African American students. Although this particular study did not examine low-performing students, this finding is consistent with prior research that focused on the effects of counseling for low-performing students. Prior research findings do not indicate that the provision of counseling services is an
effective strategy for improving the overall achievement level of low-performing students (Tierney, 1992; Herr, 1985). In studies that compared differences of students’ performance and degree completion, low-performing students receiving counseling services generally have not been found to achieve at a higher level. Similarly, this present study finds that frequent use of counseling alone does not necessarily improve the academic performance or degree completion status for students. Prior research, however, suggests that greater student receptivity to a continuing counseling relationship apparently results from having had assistance and friendly counsel at the time when the loneliness and confusion associated with the transition to college is the greatest (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Rendón, Jaloma, and Nora, 2000). From the students’ perspective, previously cited research also suggests that undergraduate African American students value most highly counselors who function as mentors, and who are available/accessible, knowledgeable/helpful, and personable/approachable (Walker & Taub, 2001). Thus, multicultural counseling programs have the potential to also function as a mentoring program for some African American students.

The results of this study identify specific indices of counseling use that have influences on the graduation status of African American students. As mentioned above, African American students who initiate counseling contact for academic concerns and general office visits tend to graduate within six years or less. These findings contribute further by identifying specific junctures in the undergraduate experience of African American students in which those interventions are likely to promote students’ development and increase the probability of graduation. For example, African American students in this study with a high GPA were six times more likely to graduate within six
years or less. Tyler (1969) came to this conclusion by studying counseling and its overall effects based on treatment versus control groups. Within this method, Tyler studied various students with various grade point averages prior to them utilizing counseling and after they utilized counseling. Tyler focused on counseling as the treatment and concluded that counseling had its greatest effects on high performing students. The findings of this current study came to this conclusion using a logistic regression model. The findings of this current study examined a binary logistic regression model that indicate there is one independent variable (GPA) which has a statistically significant influence on whether a student does or does not graduate within six year after entering college. Examination of the [Exp (b) 6.40] values for GPA indicate that those with higher GPA values were six times more likely to graduate with six years or less after starting college.

Finally, this study adds to our existing knowledge base by clarifying the role and vital contributions of counselors who deliver unique services to African American undergraduate students. As indicated in this study, African American students can seek multicultural counseling services for a variety of different reasons (i.e., academic progress concerns, non-specific conversations for the purposes of building and maintaining the counselor-student relationship, career and academic major choice concerns, part-time employment, financial issues, negotiating the system pertaining to counselor-student sessions initiated for the purpose of assisting the student in understanding the institutional culture, norms, and procedures, personal issues, regarding student organizations, mid-semester reporting, and a host of other reasons (see Appendix A: for a pre-coded list of college student concerns). Although students in this study were
found to make less use of counseling for choice of major/career development and employment related issues, this study, however, concluded that African American students were more likely to seek multicultural counseling for academic progress, financial issues, intake interviews, mid-semester reporting, and general office visit discussions making this service a “one-stop” resource for students.

Conclusions:

The findings of this study point to the conclusion that African American students are making use of multicultural counseling and 58% of these student graduated from the University. However, any potentially effective attempt to increase African American students’ graduation status through improvement in multicultural counseling must be guided by a clear vision of what “good” or “quality” counseling actually is. If one cannot define quality multicultural counseling, one cannot recognize it when it occurs, nor can one assess it or improve upon it. Among the factors that contribute to poor counseling is the lack of consensus about the role or function of the counselor (Leach & Sullivan, 2001).

The following literature on counseling has the potential to serve as a starting point for defining what “quality” counseling is, and may serve as a focal point for guiding the development of effective counseling practices and procedures. For example, multicultural counseling is a systematic process based on a close relationship between the student and counselor and is intended to assist students in succeeding academically, socially, and personally through the use of the full range of institutional and community resources. Counseling both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of student life (Carter, 2001; Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001; Cheatham &
Trippi, 1987). Through a systematic process, the formation of relationships between a student and counselor can allow a counselor to access and influence the quality of that particular student’s academic experience. It is unrealistic to expect a faculty member or instructor to develop ongoing personal relationships of substance and depth with each student enrolled in his or her class to successfully accomplish this (Jackson, et. al., 2005). Counseling might be better understood and conceptualized if the process of counseling and the scheduling of classes and/or registration are separated. Scheduling classes should not be confused with academic planning and student adjustment. Multicultural counseling becomes a more realistic goal when separated from class scheduling because counseling takes place throughout the academic year, not just during the few weeks prior to registration each semester. For example, this study concludes that 19.6% of students seek multicultural counseling for academic progress related issues and another 7% seek counseling for personal issues. Multicultural counseling programs that emphasize registration and record keeping might neglect attention to students’ academic and personal experiences at the institution and might miss an excellent opportunity to influence directly the quality of students’ academic concerns (Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001). Some students may enter the counseling process with a set of perceptions and expectations quite unrelated to those of the counselor. The importance of the interpersonal relationship for students should not be underestimated (Carter, 2001; Wyckoff, 1999).

Generalizations about the influences of multicultural counseling on African American students’ degree completion status can be misleading because each institution is dynamically unique in terms of academic emphasis and institutional culture. The
influences of multicultural counseling can be further complicated because the necessity to understand the student population, their educational goals, and their specific circumstances is critical. The framework presented in this study is useful from both an institutional and student perspective. To both of these audiences, the variables for the most frequent reasons for contact with a multicultural counselor are relatively consistent. African American students in this study were found to most frequently utilize multicultural counseling for academic progress/issues, financial issues, intake interview, mid semester reporting, and general office visit discussions. These findings lead to three major conclusions regarding the role and function multicultural counseling can have for African American students:

1. Multicultural counselors as humanizing agents for African American students. Being that 31.2% of the students in this study utilized multicultural counselor for general office visit discussions suggests that a multicultural counselor interacts with African American students outside the classroom on a less formal, more frequent, and more continuous basis. A multicultural counselor may be the one institutional representative with whom each African American student can have continuous contact and an ongoing relationship that may endure throughout the college experience. Thus, this study suggests that a multicultural counselor is uniquely positioned to develop a personal relationship with African American students and serve as a humanizing agent. This humanizing agent is what Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) identifies as someone whom students feel
comfortable seeking out, who knows them by name, who knows their individual interests, aptitudes, and values, and who takes special interest in their personal experiences, progress, and development.

2. Multicultural counselors as mentoring agents. More than 31% of the students in this study seek multicultural counseling for either mid semester reporting, intake interviews, and/or financial issues. This finding suggests that multicultural counselors are experienced guides who assist African American students with navigating the bureaucratic maze of institutional policies and administrative protocol, and act as a referral agent who directs and connects African American students to campus support services that best serve their needs (See Appendix A for referrals). The findings of this study also suggest that the frequent use of counseling for mid semester reporting, intake interviews, and/or financial issues points to the fact that a multicultural counselor is also a confidante to whom African American can turn for advice, counsel, guidance, or encouragement. In addition, the findings suggest that multicultural counselors provide African American students with someone on campus who listens to them actively, empathically, and non-judgmentally; and who can serve as a mentor. As highlighted by Walker and Taub (2001), counselors serve as mentoring agents by treating students as individuals to be served and developed rather than as subordinates to be evaluated and graded.

3. Multicultural counselors as educational agents. The results of this study suggest that a multicultural counselor is someone who can equip African
American students with specific strategies for success, who can assist students with academic progress/issues. (e.g., 19.6% of the students in this study seek multicultural counseling for academic progress/issues), and the co-curricular activities (i.e., students in this study can also seek counseling regarding student organizations and volunteering, see Appendix A). Although only 1% of the students in this study seek multicultural counseling for choice of major/career development or employment, it appears that multicultural counselors are also positioned to provide African American students with resources that connect their present academic experience and their future life plans through contacts revolving around choice of major and career development. Fuertes and Gretchen (2001) found that counselors can broaden students’ perspectives with respect to their personal life choices, and can sharpen their cognitive skills for making these choices. Counselors can guide students through effective problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflective decision-making.

Implications for Policy and Practice:

The three conclusions drawn from the findings of this study illustrate the role and function of a multicultural counselor. Based on these conclusions, the following systemic strategies are offered as major policy implications for “best practice” approaches to already existing multicultural counseling services for African American students.

Incentives:

The logistic regression results of this study suggest that multicultural counseling runs the risk of being perceived as a supplemental, low-status, and low-priority activity
because the frequency of student contact with a counselor had no influence on degree completion. While this finding suggests that the degree completion of African American students’ success and failures cannot be accurately associated with one single office, without any incentives to pursue excellence, it seems unlikely that counselors will be motivated to invest the time and energy needed to improve the quality of their work.

Research on factors that promote systematic and systemic changes toward student-centered professional activities indicates two of the most common barriers to the change process are the influence of educational tradition and limited incentives (Constantine, et. al., 2001). Based on the results of this present study, African American students are in fact utilizing multicultural counseling services for a various reasons. In order for multicultural counseling to be successful at meeting the needs of students, counselors need to know that the institution considers counseling to be a high-priority professional activity. A policy to recognize outstanding multicultural counseling/services for the quality of counseling students receive might be one such incentive.

*Orientation training and professional development policies:*

Incentives are one such way to enhance the quality of multicultural counseling. Based on a website review of this particular multicultural counseling center, http://www.equity.psu.edu/mrc/, there doesn’t appear to be a systemic orientation training program for counselors’ professional development. Proper orientation and professional development policies are critical components to producing high-quality counseling services. Policies for orientation need to be augmented by professional development seminars and workshops, and supplemented by counselor support delivered in the form of a carefully constructed and regularly updated “counseling handbook and/or counselor
A comprehensive multicultural counseling handbook should include, but be limited to: (a) current academic progress/issues policy information (e.g., up-to-date information on academic progress related materials) (b) current information relating to financial aid issues (e.g., resources and referral agents for students who may be in financial aid need); (c) for students in this study who seek multicultural counseling for mid-semester reporting and intake interviews, student self-help and self-management information would be useful (e.g., strategies for learning and time management and the names, phone numbers, and office hours of relevant and key campus and community support services and resources); (d) information and resources for students found in this study who seek counseling for choice of major/career development and/or employment (e.g., learning assistance center, career development center, major academic advisor, local service-learning opportunities); and (e) strategies relating to the process of developmental counseling for students in this study who seek multicultural counseling for general office visit discussions (e.g., student-referral strategies, and concrete counseling behaviors or practices that effectively implement developmental counseling).

The results of this study indicate that African American students seek multicultural counseling for the above most frequent reasons. Research reviewed by Fuertes & Gretchen (2001) indicates that multicultural counselor preparation and training has a demonstrable impact on student retention and graduation, as evidenced by lower attrition rates for students whose counselors receive training in multicultural counseling techniques relative to student whose counselors are untrained.
**Assessment and evaluation policies:**

Another key element not examined in this study nor found on the website of this multicultural counseling center is the evidence of an assessment and evaluation policy for multicultural counseling. Regular assessment of multicultural counseling may send a clear message to counselors that student counseling is an important professional responsibility and it could also increase the likelihood that weaknesses in the counseling program can be identified and corrected. As found in the contacts variable of the logistic regression from this study, frequency of contacts alone does not influence degree completion. Conversely, failure to monitor and evaluate multicultural counseling tacitly communicates the message that it is a student service which is not totally effective and valued by the institution. Therefore, the mere fact that counselors are aware that their counseling is being assessed may, in itself, lead to improvement in the quality of multicultural counseling delivered to students.

Assessment should also reflect the perspectives of counselors, as well as students. Counselors should be given the opportunity to assess the quality of administrative support they receive for counseling. For example, the effectiveness of orientation, training, and development they received, the usefulness of support materials or technological tools provided for them, the viability of their counseling case load, and the effectiveness of counseling administrative policies and procedures. National survey research of first-year student counseling and advising practices indicates that only 11% of postsecondary institutions involve advisors as evaluators in the assessment process (Policy Center on the First Year of College, 2003). This is a disappointing finding, because involving counselors in the assessment process can serve two very valuable purposes: (a) provides
first-hand feedback to the counseling program director that can be used for program 
 improvement, and (b) enables counselors to become active agents of evaluation, which 
 serves to increase their personal investment in, and accountability of, the counseling 
 program.

The logistic regression results of this study can also serve as first-hand feedback 
 and evaluation for multicultural counselors by highlighting some of the variables that 
 have an influence on graduation. More specifically the results summarized in the logistic 
 regression models 3 and 4 in Table III which indicate that higher GPA is more likely to 
 be associated with graduating within six years of entering college (Block Chi square 
 values = 45.43, p<.001). In addition, these results revealed that gender, college entered 
 (Block Chi square = 1.93, p=.38), and number of visits/contacts (Block Chi square = .28, 
 p=.59) had no statistical influence on degree completion. The results of the study can 
 also concretely illustrate to multicultural counselors that African American students are 
 most frequently making contact with counselors for academic progress/issues, financial 
 issues, intake interviews, mid semester reporting, and general office visit discussions. 
 Multicultural counselors can begin to use this information to strategize on some best 
 practice approaches to ensure they are meeting the most frequent needs of African 
 American students utilizing this service. In addition, counselors can also become more 
 active agents in the assessment process if they engage in self-assessment. This could be 
 done in an on-line narrative form, perhaps as part of a counseling portfolio, which might 
 include: a personal statement of multicultural counseling philosophy, multicultural 
 counseling strategies employed, counselor development activities, self-constructed 
 counseling materials, and responses to student evaluations. This type of counselor self-
assessment could also be used as evidence of counseling quality and counted in decisions about salary increases, comparable to how the teaching portfolio is used in faculty evaluation of instructional effectiveness.

*Policy incentives for students to meet regularly with counselors regarding “academic progress/issues” and/or “general office visit discussions”:*

It is evident from the results summarized in Figure 5 of this study that African American students are seeking multicultural counseling for academic progress issues and/or general office visit discussions and collectively 53% of these students graduated with in six years or less from the institution. Combined, these two most frequent reasons (academic progress and general office visit discussions) for contact with a multicultural counselor yielded the highest graduation percentage found in Figure 5. At the institution where this study was conducted, however, students can schedule courses and/or register for classes electronically without ever meeting with a university personnel staff member. Allowing students to design an academic plan and to select courses relevant to that plan without advice or counsel could be risky. This is a very risky procedure to employ at any university, but especially for some students with diverse academic goals and intentions, and for students with diverse levels of academic preparedness. While the practice of registration without counsel may be consistent with the advancement of technology and promoting a student friendly service, having absolutely no counseling (or even informal advice) might work against the institutions goals for retention and graduation.

Requiring a counselor’s signature as a prerequisite or precondition for course scheduling and/or registration provides an incentive for students to make contact with their counselors for academic progress or general office visit discussion reasons, and
could also serve as tool for retention and degree completion by enhancing the quality of students’ academic planning and decision making.

By providing student incentives to meet with counselors for academic progress/issues or general office visit discussion reasons, counselors will also have an opportunity to interact with students as persons, rather than process them as just registrants. Counselors would also be able to explore or assist students with clarifying broader, long-term academic plans, rather than focusing narrowly on deadline driven tasks.

*Effective counselors for first-year African American students:*  

Research indicates that at least one-half of all students who drop out of college will do so during their first year (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 1999). According to Cheatham and Trippi (1989), the most critical time in establishing the kind of one-on-one contacts between African American students and their counselors that contribute to student success and satisfaction occur during the first year of college. Support for this observation is provided by Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) study on “Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education: A Framework for Success.” These researchers’ recommendation for improving African American and minority student retention and degree completion was to invest in the first year experience activities and other institutional resources to better serve entering students.

Considering the continued use of multicultural counseling by African American students in this study who made contact at the beginning of the academic year, the logistic regression results of this study also confirm the importance of initial contact early
in the first semester. The grade point average (GPA) findings of this study suggest that African American students who made multiple contacts with a counselor in their first semester (1999) and earned a high GPA were six times more likely to graduate within six years or less. Multicultural counseling during the first-semester of college may also be one way to promote retention and degree completion. The importance of first-year multicultural counseling for the retention of African American students, in particular, is empirically supported by research indicating that the frequency of personal contacts between African American freshmen and their counselor is the variable that is most strongly associated with retention through the critical first-year; furthermore, the frequency of student-counselor contact is significantly higher if the first contact occurs early in the first-year (Cheatham & Trippi, 1989).

As Tinto (1987) points out, “Students are more likely to become committed to the institution and, therefore stay, when they come to understand that the institution is committed to them. There is no ready programmatic substitute for this sought of commitment. Programs cannot replace the absence of high quality, caring and concerned faculty and staff” (p. 176). As institutions continue to recruit and retain African American students, they should also seek to recruit and retain quality counselors who are committed to the success of its students as soon as they arrive at the institution.

**Recommendations and Areas for Future Research:**

The aforementioned findings of this present study reveal that multicultural counseling programs are successful in many aspects of African American students’ graduation status, but the logistic regression results of this study also reveal that multicultural counseling programs may not be presently well positioned to deliver high-
quality counseling in all aspects of student development. Having several years of experience working in a multicultural counseling center, the researcher of this study believes that through open discussions with multicultural counselors should come ideas for advances in the development and transformation of multicultural counseling services. In these cases what may be most interesting is not what was statistically significant. Rather, the most important findings could be that there are other multiple, unaccounted factors that may be influencing multicultural counseling and its impact on African American students’ degree completion. As found in the logistic regression results of this study which indicate that the number of contacts with a multicultural counselor alone [Exp (b) 1.02] had no influence on graduation, further research should seek to examine the systematic and systemic needs of multicultural counseling at this and other institutions and by using various different research methods before it can be expected to approach a level of program quality that exerts dramatic impact on African American student graduation.

Being that this study did not attempt to focus on the reasons why some students withdrawal, transfer, and/or did not graduate within six years, future research should attempt to examine these students to uncover some of their specific challenges associated with degree completion. A study design of this nature could be useful because it might explain the limitations of this study that did not capture the variability in the decision making process of African American students who withdrawal, transfer, and/or did not graduate within six years.

Another curious finding is the negative relationship between the utilization of counseling for building and maintaining the student-counselor relationship and students’
likelihood of graduating. Ironically, despite widespread dissatisfaction with advising, students express a strong desire for counselor/advisor contact and place a high value on academic counseling relative to other student services (Wyckoff, 1999). Students who make extensive use of counseling for general office visit discussions may be those who are failing to establish adequate peer relationships, join social and academic organizations, and generally lack integration into the life of the campus (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Rend n, 1994; Jalomo, 1995; Nora, Kraemer, and Itzen, 1997). Further focused study of this finding is required.

Due to some limitations in the existing data for this study, further research might also attempt to replicate these findings with other special populations (i.e., returning adults, students with disabilities, and/or other ethnic minority students) and at other similar research one institutions. As Tinto (1993) points out, students enter institutions of higher education with a range of differing family and community backgrounds (e.g. socioeconomic status, parental education), a variety of personal attributes (e.g. gender, race), skills (social, intellectual), financial resources, dispositions (e.g. motivations, political references), and various types of pre-college educational experiences and achievements, including identity development. These attributes are filtered through the students’ commitment to the institution and their personal goal to graduate. These variables could then be incorporated into another quantitative model that will explore the actual unique contribution of multicultural counseling above and beyond these other factors, or it can control for these other factors in the research design.

Such research might also attempt to assess the influences of multicultural counseling for African American students from a qualitative perspective. A qualitative
perspective would allow African American students to express who and what was making a difference in their academic lives and why this was so. It could very well be that African American students would report that they experience challenges with academic/social integration and interaction (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993), ethnic and racial identity (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000), and interacting with the dominate culture (Ancis & Szymanski, 2001) and seek multicultural counseling programs as essential and vital to their personal and/or academic development. The key importance of a qualitative study would probe further into the students’ perspective about their personal experiences and their utilization of multicultural counseling. Multiple method approaches are likely to improve the current corpus of counseling and degree completion research.

Closing Summary:

While the graduation status of African American students who utilized multicultural counseling in this study is relatively higher (58%) than the national percentage (40%), it appears that multicultural counseling has some influence on degree completion. However, the logistic regression results reviewed in this study indicate that frequency of contacts with a multicultural counselor has no influence on degree completion for African American students. This finding suggests that there is a need for, and room for, improvement in the quality of understanding multicultural counseling as it relates to the graduation status of African American students at predominately White universities. Therefore, this study suggests that in order to promote extensive and enduring gains in degree completion, multicultural counseling programs should consider incorporating some systemic changes in five fundamental areas: incentives for
multicultural counselors, orientation training and professional development activities for multicultural counselors, multicultural counselor assessment and program evaluation, policy incentives for students to meet regularly with counselors regarding “academic progress/issues” and/or “general office visit discussions,” and developing effective counseling for first-year African American students. These five areas could serve as the primary tools for the construction, enhancement, and/or execution of a quality multicultural counseling program. If institutions of higher education are serious about their commitment to these five fundamental areas, then the desire to have quality multicultural counseling programs may be successful and the original mission of these programs designed to promote quality student services for retention and degree completion for underrepresented students might be accomplished at high volumes.
References


College Results Online Web tool; Education Trust; http://www.collegeresults.org/


“What Do I Want To Be. . .?” (1997). *LAS News*. (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Newsletter, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Winter, p. 12.


## APPENDIX A:

### CODES FOR COUNSELING CONTACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSULT</th>
<th>FOLLOW UP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD  Assistive Devices</td>
<td>AA Appointment Scheduled after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP  Academic Progress/Issues</td>
<td>CS Counselor Will Contact Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP  Buddy Program Information</td>
<td>CI Counselor Will Mail Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM  Choice of Major/Career Development</td>
<td>NF No Follow Up At This Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR  Course Registration</td>
<td>SA Student Will Schedule Appointment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS  Course Selection</td>
<td>SC Student Will Contact Counselor</td>
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<td>EP  Employment</td>
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<td>EO  Educational Opportunities</td>
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<td>FI  Financial Issues</td>
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<td>GR  Graduate School Information</td>
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<td>HL  Health/Medical</td>
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<td>HR  Housing/Residence Life Issues</td>
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<td>II  Intake Interview</td>
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<td>LG  Legal/Disciplinary</td>
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<td>LD  Possible Learning Disability</td>
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<td>MR  Mid Semester Report</td>
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<td>NS  Negotiating the System</td>
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<td>OV  Office Visit/General Discussion</td>
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<td>PA  Physical Accessibility</td>
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<td>PE  Pre-Enrollment/Admissions</td>
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<td>PI  Personal Issues</td>
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<td>PK  Parking</td>
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<td>PT  Placement Testing/Results</td>
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<td>RA  Classroom Accommodation</td>
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<td>RF  Reference Letter</td>
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<td>RI  Resumes/Internships/Career</td>
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<td>RL  Relationships</td>
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<td>SK  Study Skills</td>
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<td>SI  Student Status Inquiry</td>
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<td>SO  Social Concern</td>
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<td>SP  Scheduling Appointment</td>
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<td>SS  Social Stereotyping/Discrimination</td>
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<td>SV  Student Organizations/Volunteering</td>
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<td>TA  Test Accommodation</td>
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<td>TM  Time Management</td>
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<td>TT  Tutoring</td>
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<td>WD  Withdrawal</td>
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### FOLLOW UP

| AA  Appointment Scheduled after Counseling Session |
| CS  Counselor Will Contact Student |
| CI  Counselor Will Mail Information |
| NF  No Follow Up At This Time |
| SA  Student Will Schedule Appointment |
| SC  Student Will Contact Counselor |

### REFERRAL

| AC  Academic Coordinator |                                             |
| AO  Admissions Office |                                             |
| BU  Bursar |                                             |
| BV  Blindness and Visual Services |                                             |
| CA  College Advisor |                                             |
| CC  Other Staff in Unit |                                             |
| CD  Career Services |                                             |
| CL  Campus Life |                                             |
| CP  CAPS |                                             |
| DR  Program Director |                                             |
| EL  ESL Program |                                             |
| FO  Fleet Operations |                                             |
| IE  Intensive English |                                             |
| LC  University Learning Center |                                             |
| LS  Library Services |                                             |
| MU  Multicultural Resource Center |                                             |
| NR  No Referral |                                             |
| OD  Office for Disability Services |                                             |
| OF  Off Campus Agency |                                             |
| OS  Office of Student Aid |                                             |
| OU  Other University Office |                                             |
| PA  Peer Assistant |                                             |
| PC  Psychological Clinic |                                             |
| PF  Professor/Instructor/Teaching Assistant |                                             |
| PO  Parking Office |                                             |
| PR  Program/Assigned Counselor |                                             |
| RG  Registrar |                                             |
| TU  Tutor |                                             |
| UH  University Health Services |                                             |
| VR  Vocational Rehabilitation |                                             |
| WB  WWW Site |                                             |
ESTIMATED FRESHMAN PREDICTED BACCALAUREATE SCIENCE & ENGINEERING GRADE-POINT AVERAGE CHART

Admission consideration of Penn State freshman applicants to the Colleges of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Engineering, Behrend Engineering, Behrend Science, the Eberly College of Science, and Harrisburg: Science, Engineering, and Technology.

<table>
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Instructions: Find the column corresponding to the student's estimated high school grade-point average and the row corresponding to the student's estimated SAT mathematics test score. The value in the intersection of that row and that column is the estimated freshman predicted baccalaureate science & engineering grade point average for those intervals.

UATMAPP/6GFA3E.XLS
ESTIMATED FRESHMAN PREDICTED BACCALAUREATE LIBERAL ARTS AND PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE GRADE-POINT AVERAGE CHART

Admission consideration of Penn State freshman applicants to the Colleges/Schools of Agricultural Sciences, Arts and Architecture, Smeal College of Business Administration, Communications, Education, Health and Human Development, Liberal Arts, Division of Undergraduate Studies, Behrend Business, Behrend General Studies, Harrisburg: Behavioral Science, Education, Humanities, Public Affairs, and Business Administration.

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Instructions: Find the column corresponding to the student's estimated high school grade-point average and the row corresponding to the student's estimated SAT total scores. The value in the intersection of that row and that column is the estimated freshman predicted baccalaureate liberal arts/professional college grade point average for those intervals.
VITA

Marcus A. Whitehurst earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree and a Master of Arts Degree from Binghamton University, State University of New York. He arrived at The Pennsylvania State University in 1994 and earned a Master of Education in Higher Education and would later complete the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Theory and Policy.

Mr. Whitehurst has been employed at The Pennsylvania State University’s Multicultural Resource Center since 1996. He served as a multicultural counselor from 1996-1998. In 1998, Mr. Whitehurst became the director of the Multicultural Resource Center and is still currently in this position.